

Marty Whitford • Publisher/Editorial Director

Looking at the men in the mirror

Norm Cooper's business tips trigger soul searching, change

I look in the mirror and see five men: The man I was, the man I think I am, the man I really am, the man I think I can become, and the man I truly can and should become. In this case, the “mirror” came in the form of correspondence from one of our contributors, my good friend Norm Cooper, a *PMP* Hall of Famer and past president of the National Pest Management Association (NPMA). Cooper's correspondence — “Not-So-Secret Business Tips That Work” — has been on my mind since I opened the envelope containing the gems. The business tips triggered in me a deep soul searching, followed a little later by the three keys to growth: honesty, openness and willingness (to change). Here are five of Cooper's tips, followed by my reflections:

1 Improve by just 1% per day, and in less than three months you'll be twice as good. *Sometimes we spend so much time looking up at the mountain's summit we don't fully appreciate how far we've come from the valley. We reach the peak one step at a time.*

2 Know when to walk. There are times when dropping a customer can enhance your credibility and profitability — along with your peace of mind.

If a customer fails to provide the needed environmental conditions (proper sanitation, clutter removal, pest exclusion and harborage elimination) and ignores essential recommendations, consider discontinuing your service. Other times, a client might be verbally abusive to your coworkers. All business isn't necessarily good business. Amen! *As the old adage says: “We can please some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but we can't please all of the people all of the time.”*

3 At initial meetings with important customers and prospects, ensure you obtain individuals' email addresses because they're as vital as securing phone numbers. *While nothing replaces face-to-face meetings and phone conversations with customers and colleagues, email has emerged as the go-to communications platform. My old-school self also must admit that email's cousin, texting, eventually might become the fourth leg of the business communications table.*

4 Every so often, copy yourself on an email so you can purview the messages recipients read. *I already copy myself on many emails for organization and recordkeeping. Practicing this for role reversal now as well, I realize I need to refine what I say and type more regularly with four filtering questions:*

- »1 Is it necessary?
- »2 Is it 100-percent true, unbiased, accurate and complete?
- »3 Is it clear and concise?
- »4 Is its tone appropriate and respectful?

5 Absence doesn't always make the heart grow fonder. Sometimes it causes amnesia. *The immediate information generation has benefitted considerably from the Internet, email, texting, social media and a host of other communication advancements. But we must remember our roots. Old-school communications (face-to-face meetings and phone conversations) remain the gold standard.*

Next month, I'll reflect on the remaining business tips Cooper sent me. Until then, let's work on practicing the aforementioned five gems. **PMP**



We reach the peak
one step at a time.

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