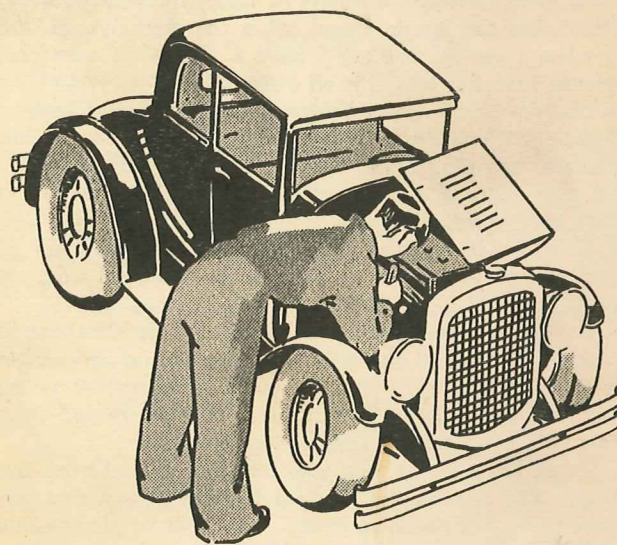


CHECK-UP



A talk by Jacob Kindleberger, president of the Kalamazoo Vegetable Parchment Company, given at the opening of the annual KVP sales meeting, Parchment, Michigan, December 27th, 1933.

I am not going to call this a Sales Meeting. I have been thinking about this Meeting for many days, and it is going to be an Annual Check-up Meeting.

Every time I take a trip in my automobile I take the machine to the garage and say to Jake DeGraff, "Jake, I'm going on a long trip. Go over this machine from soup to nuts and see that everything is in good shape." So he goes over that machine of mine, tightens up every bolt, cleans the spark plugs, takes the shimmy out, etc. So when I get in that car I have a feeling of confidence because Jake has looked it all over and checked it all over.

That is exactly what this meeting is for—a Check-up Meeting. I find from close observation of business and business men that those who do take time off every now and then and check up all of the weak links, somehow or other keep going. Those companies who do not take time off to check themselves over, who feel that they are all right and go on year after year in the same old way, are finally weighed in the balance and found wanting.

For many years I have said that if this Company is going to continue to hit on all cylinders and be prosperous, we must get together and check up on ourselves to see where we are slipping. Then, as quickly as we find these little things wrong, we then can correct them.

There are a lot of men who feel they do not need this thing. The men in the Medical Fraternity say that you ought to have a check-up every year. I have always said "Piffle! I feel finer than a fiddle! There isn't anything wrong with me!" But down deep in my heart I know that they are right. I know that Bill Hays is right when he says "See your dentist twice a year." It's a stitch in time.

It is an awful thing when men are so conceited that they think they are just about all right, that they do not have to be checked up, that they cannot improve. God pity the man who thinks he cannot improve. He is a sad spectacle.

I am sorry to say that some of our men in their letter writing have not improved at all during the last year. Some are even getting worse. I say that because I know. I have gone over a number of the letters in the files and I know that a checking up is needed. I say that you cannot go through another year without checking up!

I have here Exhibit A — a letter which is full of thought and full of soul.

It is from Sears, Roebuck and Company.

"Dear Mr. Kindleberger:

Soon another year will have passed—a year that has been replete with the unusual and unexpected. We have lived through this history-making era and all are better for the varied experience. And, now that we approach the last of the old year, we cannot help but feel that we have progressed, that we are definitely on the way out of the depression and entering once again a period of prosperity.

"And, as we reflect upon the year, which soon will be history, we keenly recognize the part you have played in the success which we have enjoyed. We greatly appreciate the co-operation and assistance which you gave us and are sure that the trials of this year have formed a more lasting and stronger association between us.

"It is, therefore, with a sincere feeling of appreciation that we earnestly wish you and your associates a very Merry Christmas and a New Year abounding in all good things."

This man didn't just sit down and say, "Here, Mamie, take this." He thought it all over carefully and worded it just right. Just think—That Great Big Company giving us credit for their success! Think of that!

That has given me an idea that there are literally thousands of new things that we could do which we are not doing. We are going to show this beautiful spirit of appreciation in our company. We are not only going to be nice to those whom we sell, but also to those from

whom we buy. Great is the man who will be nice to one from whom he buys.

There are a few fundamental things which we want to get in this meeting. If we want a good year in 1934 we are going to stick to the old fundamentals that have never failed and never will fail. That is the thing I want to talk about.

I am going to use the illustration of fixing an automobile.

We take our machine to the garage to get a number of things done. We get gas, oil, water, air, get the machine greased, spark plugs cleaned, carburetor adjusted, battery charged, headlights fixed, dents taken out, steering wheel fixed, shimmy taken out of the front wheels, etc.

Now, I will take each one of these and apply them to a human being.

Gas

What is gas? Gas is Knowledge. There are different kinds of gas. To hear Lowell Thomas on the radio, you would think that Blue Sunoco is the best gas in the world. Once upon a time I bought gas with water in it, and you know what happens then. That is the kind of knowledge we sometimes get. It is not truthful and not accurate.

Many a fine order has been lost because a man tried to bluff. I tried this bluffing game in my days, don't forget that. I am not standing here as a saint before you. When I was on the road I tried to bluff, but I got cured of it. Haven't you heard this remark? "Gee, I like that fellow. He is so honest, so straight forward. Yes sir, I'll keep on buying from that fellow because he always gives me straight stuff." So when you get gas (knowledge) let it be good gas.

The knowledge that a man must have, and I want to emphasize this, is first a knowledge of the needs of the

customer. We know that you do not know all of the details of how paper is made in this mill and you don't need to know all of them; but we want this year to emphasize the fact that you must know the needs of your customer, know enough about your mill and have sufficient knowledge of your line that you can supply your customer's needs. You cannot help him unless you know his business. That is the greatest winning proposition there is in the world. Know your customer's needs! Know what he should have.

I wouldn't go in to see a customer and sell him any grade of paper that we make until I first stood outside and looked at his place from the outside to see what kind of business place he had. I often say to the girl in the outside office, "Please don't tell him I'm here. I want to talk to you first." Then I get first hand information which helps me in making the sale.

I can trace you men all over the country and tell you where you fail. Why do I know? Because we send another man into your territory who gets the business and we find out then why you did not get the business. I am not talking through my hat. I am in the selling game and I have been for thirty-five years.

Oil

What does oil do to your engine. It makes things go smoother. If you want to know what a mess you can get into, let your oil run low. You just won't get very far.

How can we use that in our selling? Listen. The man who studies the art of saying things beautifully and effectively, is the man who gets the attention. People listen to the man who has a good voice.

The man who is straight forward and honest in what he says scores every time. There is nothing so nauseating in the world as an actor in business. Straight forward stuff is the thing that counts. Nothing else.

Know how to say things when a man has a pain or isn't feeling just right. You don't talk to him the same as if he had no pains or was feeling fine. You must change your tactics. There is nothing in the world as good as sympathizing with a man who has a pain. You men must know the art of saying things under very peculiar situations when you are on the road. The man who knows not how to treat these conditions is lost.

I don't mind telling you because I think we ought to know the truth, for the truth will set us free. There are men sitting in this room whose customers write to me and say "Why do you keep that man? I don't want him to write to me any more" and all that sort of stuff.

What are you going to say when someone uses that old-time stuff, "Your price is too high," "I didn't like that last shipment."

Are you going to wire the house right away? Don't waste your money. What are you going to say? That is a legitimate question. The best answer I know of is a deaf ear. Don't hear the question at all but keep right on bubbling over with enthusiasm about your article and the first thing you know you will have him sold. When he brings up price again, tell him a new angle on your article and keep on bubbling over. Pretty soon he will catch the enthusiasm.

I have tried out all of these things and I know that they work. I wouldn't be silly enough to come before you, you Master Salesmen, and tell you stuff that isn't so. Not on your life. I have been there and tried out these things and they work! Life is too short to hold on to anything that doesn't work.

Now what are you going to say when a man tells you he didn't like the last lot? Listen men. Many of you pass the buck on to the mill immediately. You can't write to the office soon enough to tell them that the last lot

was no good, etc. You men are also hired to pour oil on the troubled waters. You are there and know the situation. Don't depend on the mill to do everything. Pour oil on the troubled waters.

The first year or two we were in business, we had a big strike and all of the paper mills here were boarded up. We were buying our waterleaf from Bryant and we had to keep going, so we got some waterleaf from the Lakeside Paper Company in Wisconsin (Mr. Burnside).

Burnside also had gotten orders for his own particular grade of paper, so he didn't care whether he had our orders or not. He shipped us a lot of stuff that was just junk and we couldn't parchementize it. So I jumped on a train and went over to Neenah and I was quite warm under the jacket, ready to raise a little Hades. Burnside met me at the train and said "Gee, I'm awfully glad you came. I want you to see our mill. Sit down and have a smoke." I started to talk about the paper but he stopped me in the middle of the sentence and said something about the mill. When he stopped I began talking about the rotten paper he shipped and he said "Let's go through the mill first." He played for time. We went through the mill and he talked to me all of the way through about the various points of interest. By the time I had gotten through the mill I wasn't half as mad as I was at the beginning. Then when we did talk about the paper, he said "Jake, I was afraid of that paper. We'll start the machine up right away on your grade and you ship that other car back. I'm awfully glad you came up. Come on up to the house for dinner."

Now, wasn't that fine? That is pouring oil on the troubled waters, handling a bad situation like a master.

Men, when you go around, carry some oil of gladness with you. People have trouble enough these days. They are having a hard time keeping their old boat afloat, so don't add to their difficulties. Carry a mirror along with

you and take a look at that face you are carrying around. If there is something the matter with that thing, straighten it up.

Water

What does water do? Water keeps the engine from getting too hot. If you didn't have water in that radiator, the engine would heat up. Water is poise. That is a great big word. I bow in reverence to the man who has poise.

Last year 32,000 business men committed suicide. They lost their poise. They couldn't stand it. When everybody gets excited around you and you can stand in the midst of all of them and keep your poise, you are great. He that does that is greater than he that taketh a city.

Keep your shirt on, using the language of the street. When others get warm, you cool them down with your poise. When everyone is excited, you set the example. We have a peculiar organization here. It wouldn't do if they were all like me. I want to take a lead pipe around here every once in a while but if I do that and I try to get Hayward to do the same thing, he won't do it. He just sits down, talks to me real easy, and everything smooths over. It is a good thing to have water around to help out a little bit. There is a time when an explosion is needed and there is a time when poise is needed. Blessed is the outfit that is well balanced. That is the only way an organization can progress.

When man was created, one man was made for one thing, another for another, and God, in His great wisdom, found that that was good. That idea has played a big part in the success of our company.

When a customer is all excited and a little bit peeved, just say "If you knew our house as I know them, you would know that that is a mistake of the head and not of the heart." When you come back in the same tone and

language that the customer uses, you are licked; but if you change the method, you will be the conqueror.

Air

We usually look upon a salesman as full of wind. Therefore, you salesmen should be interested in this topic. There are various kinds of air. You have air in your tires. That is confined air, and I want to talk about some confined air that is in salesmen. When you have the right amount of air in your tires you can make seventy miles per hour without a blow-out. In order to be a good salesman you must be a good talker, but you do not have to continue to keep the conversation alive. The best salesman I ever met was a man who didn't talk very much.

A short time ago I went into the store of A. W. Johnson in Kalamazoo to buy a purse for my wife, and I learned something in salesmanship. He said very few words, but every sentence was a gold nugget, every sentence was a hammer on the nail, and after he had made about three of them, the nail was in. He had made the sale.

He sold me a ten dollar purse for my wife that she said she could buy anywhere for four dollars, and I'll tell you how he did it. He laid out three or four purses with a few words about each. Then he picked up the ten dollar purse and said "This is the purse for you. It's a purse for a lifetime. It is consistent for you."

Many times I go in just to see this man in action. He has his air confined like the air in a tire.

You know, it is a good thing to sit down at a buyers desk and let the buyer do the talking and you do the complimenting on his wonderful wisdom. If you do that you will get more orders than if you try to do all of the talking. I find you don't learn much listening to yourself but you learn a heap listening to the other fellow.

Spark Plugs

You know what happens to your machine on a sandy road, or a hill, when your spark plugs are fouled up? How do your spark plugs get fouled up? Let me show you what happens to you and me when our spark plugs get fouled up.

Carelessness. Carelessness about little things. The little things of life will make or break you. The only difference between small men and big men is that one pays attention to the little things, the little courtesies, the way of saying things. Carelessness is part of the carbon on the spark plugs. I know it has crept into our organization.

Why do we have a depression after a period of prosperity? Carelessness! Carelessness creeps in. That is perfectly good logic. Depressions follow periods of great prosperity because the spark plugs get fouled up with carelessness. Remember, in a time of prosperity, that there is a depression ahead of you and it will follow as sure as day follows night.

Laziness. Have you ever said on a cold morning "Oh, it's cold this morning. I'll sleep a little later today and I'll go to see Mr. So & So tomorrow morning. It will be warmer and I will stay close by today."

Laziness has taken complete possession of our people in America. They are having a good time, having baskets brought to them by this association and that organization and the Government sending them checks. Laziness is the worst thing that is happening today! It is a crime against the next generation! We and the government are sort of putting our stamp of approval on laziness. Washington is helping out this spirit by giving men things without any effort on their part. I know what I am talking about. You must get your pocket knife out and scrape off this laziness from the spark plugs.

You know this company doesn't give many compliments. One man said to me the other day, "I have been with this Company for ten years and this is the first time I have received a compliment." It is a great compliment to a man when he doesn't get a calling down. We know you are not very efficient, in fact only about fifteen per cent. When you are only that efficient, you are not entitled to compliments.

But, red blooded men do not want compliments! They don't look for them. You are out doing a big job and the joy comes when the work is completed in a masterly manner. That is all the satisfaction you want,—the joy of having done a big job well.

Alibis. An alibi is never liked by anyone. Let's cut out alibis in 1934.

Cowards. Many of our men can't sell bread wrappers because they say our price is too high. Now, we know bread wrappers can be sold in your territory because we have put men in similar territories where bread wrappers were not sold and we got seventy-five per cent of the business. You might as well admit that you are afraid to sell them, because we know that is the reason! It has been proved. 1934 is going to take courage. You cannot depend on past performances.

Men are coming for jobs in our mill every day saying "I used to manage so and so" or "I was vice-president of such and such a company at such a salary." Because they used to be they think we should be glad to take them in. There is nothing worse in mankind than a Has-been, a Used-to-be. The reason he is a Used-to-be is because he didn't keep his spark plugs clean from these various things I have mentioned.

Carburetor

When the carburetor is adjusted for the various seasons of the year the car runs better. We must get in the habit of adjusting ourselves for various conditions.

In 1934, we will have to make a new adjustment in our carburetor. The same adjustment of 1933 will not do for 1934.

What is this? The little things. The little things like the little bugs that eat out the heart of a great oak tree—you can't see them but they are there. Just a little turn of that carburetor makes all of the difference in the world. It is good for all of us, at least once a year, to be frank about these things that either make or break us.

Personal appearance. You are judged by first sight. It is all right not to look just so, to have your tie off to one side, your clothes shabby, your shoes not shined—if you are an Elbert Hubbard and are so eloquent that when you open your mouth people forget your clothes. Elbert Hubbard, for instance, could wear sackcloth and the world would listen to him. It doesn't matter as long as you have the stuff in you, but I would advise that you pay attention to these little things. I am not saying this to you particularly because you need it but I am saying it because it is a part of the program and every man should have it.

Get adjusted also in your relationship with the men in our Main Office. There have been some little misunderstandings. Some of our men do not get along. There is always an irritation. Get this adjusted. Everything will go smoother for all of us if you do that.

There are many men you, no doubt, wish were dead. I don't mind telling you that I wish a lot of men were dead so we could have a new man to write to or to do business with, but they don't die, and by and by we adjust ourselves to them. Learn the old parable in the Good Old Book about the vine and the branches. Men, keep in touch constantly with the home office. When your branch is severed from the main vine the sap will cease to flow and the end is near at hand. Let there be good contacts with the home office.

Clutch

You men may say that you are making more calls, more contacts, than ever before, but are you as effective? It isn't the number of calls you make. What effective work have you done? Is your clutch slipping? I don't mind telling you that the thing that keeps me awake at night is because we have men in our organization whose clutch is slipping. Today we are trying to tighten the clutch. I am doing my best today to help you get your old car in fine shape so you will be hitting on all cylinders in 1934. I am doing this not to entertain you nor for my own benefit, but the benefit of our sales force. Make a good annual examination.

Battery

There is nothing worse in the world than a man whose enthusiasm is gone, who has no more fire left, not enough fire left to ignite the gas in the cylinder. In this world you get back what you measure out and no more. It is measured to you in the same old vessel in which you measure it. If you have the fire of enthusiasm and are not dead from the neck up you will get the same reaction from others. Get your old battery recharged and get enthusiastic.

I tell you this story every year and probably will tell it at every sales meeting we have in the future. My old boss used to say to me, "Jake, who is going to enthuse me when I get old and I lose my enthusiasm?" That is a significant remark. When you lose your enthusiasm you are through.

That is what we mean when we say this battery must be recharged. Although we have had a good year in 1933, we need recharging for 1934. New enthusiasm! If we don't get it we are through. We may go on our momentum for a little while longer but we can't go very far.

Brakes

I sometimes think that the greatest invention on an automobile is the brakes. We need a new lining on these brakes in 1934. Have you ever thought what would happen if you didn't have brakes when a little child jumped in front of your automobile? In 1934 we want good brakes. We want to put the brakes on booze and night parties that sap our vitality so that the next day we are worth nothing. Put the brakes on everything that happens to you that will make you a poorer man the next day. Do like St. Paul did. Lay aside every weight that you may win the race. That is what you need in 1934. Don't kid yourselves. The competition is getting keener and keener every day. Men are no longer afraid to get their hands dirty and to find new ways of doing things, because hunger is knocking at their door. Remember the first great commandment given to the human race. "Love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and all thy strength." Love your job with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Washing

Keep your samples clean. We men of KVP must be consistent because we are making paper for the protection of food and it is not consistent if you come around with dirty samples, dirty cases, dirty sales books. Remember this, men, you are representing the KVP Company not yourselves. Keep that in mind and do things according to the KVP way. Keep your car washed.

Headlights

Every once in a while we must put in a new bulb. What does that mean. That means advertising. You men must advertise the company wherever you go—at Sunday school, at church, at a pink tea, at the movies! You have no business to sit beside anyone more than a

minute until they know that you are working for the KVP Company, the greatest Company in the world. Keep your headlights burning. You shouldn't sit in a smoking compartment or a smoking car more than five minutes until folks know you are working for the greatest paper mill in the world.

That is the method St. Paul used when he introduced Christianity to Europe. When he was on the high seas or on dry land or wherever he went he was selling Christianity. Isn't that a hint for us? Don't hide your light under a bushel. There isn't a finer company in all of the world. Tell us where we are doing wrong and we will correct it quickly to keep it so. This company pays its men as much as they can—not as little as they can.

Now don't think I am a religious fanatic. I am not. I am the most sensible Christian you ever saw in your life. I don't recognize a denomination. I love the Catholics, the Episcopalians, the Seventh-day Adventists. I love them all.

But this one thing I do know. There is a hidden force that men have not yet recognized and taken hold of. Many men do not even know about it. I cheerfully recommend that new power to you which helps men maintain poise, helps and guides them in their work, frees them from worry. It is a strong faith in the Creator.

It doesn't matter whether you are a church man or not. You are a child of His creation as much as a minister. You should be afraid of your competitor if that man is a praying man. Watch praying men. Watch out for them. Somehow or other when you ask God Almighty to help you and are sincere about it, He does it, and miracles are performed.

"Seek ye first these things and all other things will be added unto you."

Additional copies of this address may be had, as long as the supply lasts. Address your request "Uncle Jake, c/o Kalamazoo Vegetable Parchment Company, Parchment (Kalamazoo County) Michigan

Printed on 70 lb. KVP Prosperity Offset.

Here accuracy
and quality
is law

