

Pop that Balloon! Personal Bankruptcy. He Was Broke...

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Global Research, February 11, 2019

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

Here he was, mid 30s and facing personal bankruptcy. He was coming out of a terrible divorce, with two young sons and child support that was too high for his present state of affairs.

A few years earlier, when he had his own sales business and was making good money, the divorce agreement had been fair. During that time, he had begun psychoanalysis for a gambling condition and by now, he had 'walked away' from many of those demons. However, the damage had been done and he was broke!

He went from job to job: Limo driver, bartender, salesman for various small businesses, and just not enough coming in each week to balance out the money needed to live.

He owed money to the bank for his overdraft, owed money on his Amex card, and even owed money for the rental of his home phone (Few people realized that even in the so called 'Roaring 80s', Ma Bell actually charged for the monthly rental of its phones). It got to the point that he had to monitor all incoming phone calls, as collection companies kept calling. He needed a new job that would keep him afloat... and quick!

The Sunday want ads became his new friend, and he went through the sales jobs with careful scrutiny.

Finally, an acquaintance who was a pharmaceutical rep told him of a headhunter that he always used. "Get yourself a drug sales job man, it's the best!"

The headhunter finds me a job, I keep it for a year and then go get me another one. These ass**es at Big Pharma pay good, and I do as *little* as possible for six months, then when they start breaking my balls to be more efficient, I get myself another job. The secret is to keep my resume padded each time I have to interview for a new gig. Meanwhile, I get a company car, benefits, sick days, the whole enchilada!"

He got the number of the lady the guy used at the agency, called and got an appointment. Now he had to revise his resume very carefully. Since he had his own company for six years before selling it two years earlier, he just made the changes in it to cover those two years of floating from job to job. Who could she call to verify, as *he* was the only one who knew? So, off he went to meet the lady, resume in hand. The headhunter was younger than him and not very thorough. She *bought* his resume, but was *keen* enough to see that Big Pharma would not go for what he was selling.

"They want people with more experience in the corporate world. However, I do

have a job here for a company that only cares about finding people with sales experience like yours. They are corporate, but I think they would love a guy with your cold call sales experience, especially since your expertise is telemarketing. I know the VP of sales there, and he wants people who can get on the phones and push."

She gave him the details on salary and other perks and off he went.

The interview was for a payroll company, headquartered on Long Island, about forty five minutes from his apartment. He got his only suit (a grey double breasted one) dry cleaned and was ready to rock and roll. When he entered the corporate headquarters he was amazed at how modern everything was. The many small business sales jobs he had were in offices that could have fit in this company's lobby! After filling out the forms he was greeted by the VP's personal secretary. She escorted him into the guy's office, about as large as his old business's entire office and storeroom combined. The VP was this guy just about his own age, with his suit jacket off and sleeves rolled up. They bounced lots of superficial conversation back and forth until the guy cut to the chase,

"I see by your resume that you had your own sales business. Do you think this may be too tough for you to work for a large corporation, where you have to submit to the will of management?"

He gave the guy the answers that his Big Pharma pal had schooled him on. No, he countered, what concerned him was the ability to be part of a team selling a viable product or service, and ... (the jackpot) the opportunity to earn lots of dough. "Ok, good, our salary package starts at \$ 27k plus benefits and car allowance. Viable enough?" He again followed his drug salesman friend's advice and said he needed to start with at least \$40k.

"Well, we can't justify that, even with a guy with your sales experience. (Pause) I can do \$ 35k but that is all I can offer, and I do want you with us."

Agreed, and they shook on it. The VP then called in one of his managers and introduced him to the guy. "Bruce and you will get along great. He comes from the aluminum siding business... a real tin man." Bruce was really nice, chatted with him for a half hour, and he drove home feeling on cloud nine. He now had enough to survive for the time being.

The following Monday he reported to one of the company's satellite sales offices, not too far from his apartment. There were four other guys there, his new colleagues, plus Bruce. For the time being, Bruce explained, he would be going on appointments with Bruce. Any pressure was off, and he and Bruce really hit it off great. They had lunch together each day, and spend lots of time comparing notes on each of their previous sales jobs.

"Boy oh boy, me with the tin man gig and you on the phone with your 'closeout' pitches, we both made our bones the hard way. This new job should be aces for you."

This went on for more than a few weeks, with Bruce doing most of the closing as he stood nearby observing. How long would this last? Of course, each Thursday was the weekly regional sales meeting. The VP made sure that he introduced him to the entire sales staff at

the first such meeting he attended. He was asked to give a 20 minute seminar on cold calling to their current telemarketing lead department. He got great reviews from all involved, as the one thing he did master was just that: cold calling.

When everyone got into the main meeting room, he just sat there taking in the whole shebang. He could not believe his eyes in what he observed. The VP had balloons stapled onto the front wall board.

“OK gang, you know the deal. I placed \$ 10 and \$ 20 bills inside of each balloon, with one containing our weekly super prize of a \$ 100 bill. The top closers for the week will get a chance to break a balloon. Let’s begin...”

He then called each satellite office manager and staff to stand up. One by one, each of the salespeople would say their name and report how much in new sales they obtained that week. If someone did not make any sales, he or she had to state that aloud in front of the whole group. He could *feel* the utter humiliation whenever a salesperson had to stand there and say ‘None this week’. Since Bruce had opened an account for him that week, the VP was so proud to call him up, hand him a dart and then lead the group in applause when he broke the balloon. It contained a \$ 20 in it, and the VP shook his hand.

The next day, at their satellite office, he had a chance to speak with a few of the other guys, as Bruce had to run out to meet with the VP. Two of the guys looked older than most of the other sales people in their region. “Let me explain what’s going on, since you’re new here. Larry here and me have been with the company for over what, eleven years now. Most of the others, as you probably noticed, are really young kids, like early 20s. Well, what has happened is that the company has been hiring kids right out of college with little or no actual sales experience.

Why? Well, Larry and I are part of the original sales compensation package, meaning that we get commissions like in the insurance industry: Lifetime commission as long as the customer uses our company. About one year ago the company changed their commission program, and anyone new, like you, gets commissions for 12 months, and then it becomes a house account.

Since we were *grandfathered* in, with our contract, they can’t alter our commission plan, or face a class action suit. So, they do whatever they can to get us the hell out of here! They badger, scrutinize and humiliate us with that shit that you saw yesterday afternoon. They *never* made us go through that crap before the new changes went into effect. Never!”

Within a few weeks he was notified by corporate that he was to attend a two week sales program at their New Jersey offices. He would have a room at a local motel paid for, with two in a room, and daily food allowances from Monday through Friday. He would go home for the weekend and return Monday for the next week. He was getting paid his regular salary, so.... C’est la vie.

The program was a total waste of time, with videos and role playing conducted by some outside consulting company. He could not believe how much money this corporation spent on total bu****it! He went through the motions for the two weeks, and decided at that point what he intended to do: Get out! Within one month he quit. The corporate world was *not* for him.

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