



How Much is Negativity Costing You?

How you speak to yourself can impact your success.

How much is negative “self-talk” costing you? As a business strategist, I find that mental performance frequently enters my conversations with clients. A very successful business client asked if I could help with his golf game. At certain times, he had difficulty and couldn’t figure out why. What we discovered was that his game suffered only when he played with people he knew made more money than he did (and he made in the high seven figures). He may have been telling himself, subconsciously, that a poor performance would embarrass him in front of people more financially successful than he was, and that anxiety became self-fulfilling. Having discovered this dynamic, we turned our attention back to business. The question then became, does this dynamic play out when he negotiates with people who are more successful than he is? Often, these dynamics are difficult to discover.

Whether you make a bad golf shot, fumble a football, forget to return a phone call or call someone by the wrong name, listen carefully to the way you speak to yourself. What are you telling yourself that you are not aware of? What are your sales people telling themselves? And what are your prospects telling themselves? For example, your sales people may be telling themselves, “This is the toughest client I’ve ever talked to” or “No one ever has success with this client.” This results in self-fulfilling failure.

The following steps can help identify and manage your negative self-talk:

1. Listen carefully for a couple of weeks, in various situations to the way you speak to yourself. Notice, but don’t try to stop, the negative self-talk. If you shut it off, you miss valuable information.
2. Notice how you are feeling in different circumstances. Sometimes people don’t hear self-talk, they just feel differently.
3. Begin to develop a positive script that you can say to yourself to drown out the self-talk. Compliment yourself, internally, when you succeed. Say the following affirmation 10 times every night for 60 days just before you go to sleep: “Every day, in every way, I get better and better and better.” The affirmation will plant seeds for positive self-talk. This affirmation can also be used when you realize negative self-talk is occurring.
4. At all cost, avoid telling yourself what you don’t want to have happen.

Take a look at the 2008 Super Bowl prediction I sent to the New York Post one week before the Big Game.

From: Dr. Dan Schaefer
Sent: Tuesday, January 29, 2008 3:29 PM

Subject: Self-talk will sink the Pats...

Dear Sports Editor:

For professional athletes, the impact of “self-talk” on performance can be dramatic. Here’s how I see it playing out on Sunday:

An individual and a team must avoid telling themselves what they DON’T want to have happen. Their subconscious mind fails to hear the DON’T. I believe that the Giants are telling themselves, “we want to win;” but I suspect that the Patriots are saying, “we don’t want to lose this game.”

Outcome: Pats will find a way to lose.

Regards,
Dr. Dan