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“Gone With the WIN”

Going to the SMPS National Convention in Hollywood in August?

Be sure to purchase a chance to win a \$1000 Tiffany's shopping spree, or, among other gifts, one of three AMC Theaters gift certificates provided by The Longview Group. All to benefit the SMPS Foundation.

**SMPS National Convention
Hollywood, CA
AUG 16-19**

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INSIGHTS...IN SIGHT

What a Robber Can Teach You About Customer Service

There is a true story about a famous robber. It is an unusual tale of a memorable criminal. He did not pull-off the biggest heists in the world. But he is well known in Eastern Europe. His name: Attila Ambrus.



He is NOT counted among the world's greatest robbers. That honor goes to the unknown robber(s) who, in 1945 managed to pilfer about \$4.2 billion in gold and other national war booty treasures from a train in Germany (gold currency bonds, bank notes of various countries, coins, jewelry, paintings, and other spoils). It disappeared in the last days of the Third Reich. Second place honors: a burglary of \$108 million in diamonds took place at the Antwerp Diamond Center in 2003. It seems the entire city was obsessed by a tennis tournament. During the match set the criminals lifted the “ice” along with the paperwork proving the authenticity of each diamond.

Among the world's most legendary robbers, Attila Ambrus plied his trade with great panache in the early 1990s. Attila Ambrus was an unsuccessful Transylvanian professional hockey player who shifted

careers to robbing. From 1993 to 1999, he robbed 29 formerly state-owned banks and post offices. He was able to realize about \$1 million. Is it strange we remember this bandit at all? His average take was about \$35k per larceny.

Attila is no where near being honored in the Fortune 500 of robbers. He was just your ordinary small business professional thief. “He didn't rob banks,” editorialized the Hungarian daily Magyar Hirlap after Ambrus' arrest. “He merely performed a peculiar redistribution of the wealth that differed from the elites only in its method.” But we remember him today. He was well known, and in some circles well regarded in Hungary, when he was in “business.”

You see, Attila had a style about his work that set him apart from his colleagues. He never shot anyone. No harsh words. Class always class. He was able to do his work by understanding his clients' businesses. In one case he assumed the role of the bank's janitor. In another heist he became a goalkeeper for the local hockey club. Get the inside scoop and you can get the project.

Attila's mode was classy. It is said he always savored at least two rounds of Johnny Walker Red scotch whiskey prior to each project. There are factual reports that he sent flowers



The key to Attila's notoriety, however, was his caring concern for his "clients." Expressing honest concern and caring for them as people first, and "clients" second...



to bank tellers prior to robbing them. In several cases, he sent fine, fine bottles of wine to police officers assigned to find and arrest him. He became memorable not as a successful thief; he became famous as a "professional" since he treated his associates with great dignity, caring and concern.

Attila's story is one we in professional services can learn from. Don't take me wrong - I am not suggesting you break any laws or ethical standards - ever. But here are a few lessons from Attila that I would suggest.

Pursuing small projects is too risky and too much work to make good financial sense. Unless you are a dentist, physician or other more "retail" professional services provider, accepting a large number of small projects is not likely to get you noticed. Attila's \$35k per pilfer provided puny prowess. It did little for his reputation as a professional criminal.

Attila really got to know his clients. When he understood their business from the inside out, he was ready for the job. We too can complete our professional problem solving much better and faster when we get to know the client's organization from the inside out.

The key to Attila's notoriety, however, was his caring concern for his "clients." Expressing honest concern and caring for them as people first, and "clients" second set him apart from the ordinary day-to-day bandits. Sending flowers to a poor bank teller before doing the deed shows a certain class and interest.

In the professional service business, people don't care how much you know, until they

know how much you care. If a small timer like Attila can garner an international reputation by being a kind, caring and considerate criminal, think what your reputation could be!

And the practice of having a good whiskey prior to each job? My suggestion is to wait until the project is complete and then enjoy that fine Johnny Walker Red. And why stop at two?

So what about Attila? There is a book about him called The Ballad of the Whiskey Robber. It tells the story of Attila and his pursuit by a Clouseau-like Hungarian inspector, his demolitionist deputy, and a forensics expert/ballet teacher. He is remembered with fondness all over Hungary as the "Gentleman Bandit."



When was the last time someone wrote a book about your small business? Will your reputation reach as far due to your concern and caring? I bet it will.

Saluda!

The Longview Group & SMPS Educational Partnership

The Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS), Alexandria, Virginia, and The Longview Group, have entered into an educational partnering agreement to develop and deliver a day-long seminar on the basic functions of architectural, engineering and construction companies.

The seminar is designed for support and business-related employees of professional design and construction companies who have limited or no experience in the industry.

Coupled with the one day fundamentals seminar, The Longview Group will provide a second (optional) day-long seminar on one of four topics: sales and marketing fundamentals, developing exceptional proposals, project management for smaller firms, or persuasive techniques for marketing and selling professional services.

The seminars will be held in major metropolitan areas and presented by Dr. Dennis Schrag and Dr. Douglas Wallace of Iowa City, Iowa.

The first session will be held in Milwaukee on September 15th.

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Seeking more efficiency and effectiveness in your professional service business? The Longview Group provides you INSIGHTS through training, on-the-job coaching, expert counsel, and extra-hands services.

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INSIGHTS...IN SIGHT