



# Sightings

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**September 15 – Milwaukee**  
A/E/C Essentials  
Longview Group seminar \*

**October 5 – Philadelphia**  
A/E/C Essentials  
Longview Group seminar \*

**October 6 – Philadelphia**  
Persuasive, Powerful Proposals  
Longview Group seminar \*

**October 26-27 – Salt Lake City**  
SMPS Utah and  
AIA Utah Annual Convention  
Strategic Planning and  
Market Planning

\* More information about Longview  
Group seminars can be found at:

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INSIGHTS...IN SIGHT



## Silk Alley

by Dennis Schrag

People love to buy and hate to be sold.

For centuries, Silk Alley was a crowded passageway in Peking...now called Beijing. The narrow lane hosted vendors in tents from all over China. In the past, residents and visitors would be shoved along by hordes of people of every nationality. In the summer it was hot and dusty; in December it was a wind tunnel of cold air from China's north. But it was always packed with vendors.

You could get almost anything in Silk Alley. In earlier days it was famous for spices and carpets. Just a few years ago it was THE place for knock-off Polo clothes, Dunhill ties, US \$5.00 Louis Vuitton bags and US \$6.00 Rolex watches. The travel guidebooks warned customers to look the products over very carefully. They suggested you try on any clothing since bootlegged garment tags with size information were sewn into ANY garment of any size.

Americans and Brits were ALWAYS the most desired customers. They had deep pockets and seemed incredibly obvious (oblivious?). The Chinese merchants were smart. They learned a few key phrases in English to lure the visitors into their tented stall. "Speak their language and they will pay attention." Usually two or three sellers from the family would unfold everything they could for the foreigner. "You

like?" "Very special price for you today only." "100% cotton will not shrink."

More recently, the Beijing government, bending to the needs of fire safety and the desire for more space for Silk Alley vendors, erected a four-story structure with parking underground. The large neon sign flashes Silk Alley in six languages. The building is full of 8' x 8' stalls. The goods have changed little. The increased number of sellers created even more intense vendors.

I was in Silk Alley in December. Young Chinese girls would YELL at me, "Take this home for your wife!" "Good gift for your children, mister." Some of the sellers became very very aggressive...so unlike Chinese females. Several grabbed me by the arm and pushed me into their space. Some followed me around for 15 minutes not allowing me access to other sellers. Others hung on to me physically repeating the few English words they knew and draping table clothes over my arm. I could NOT wait to get out of there.

There was one stall I entered. The seller smiled and asked how she could help. She was slow and deliberate. Did I prefer one color to another? Was the sweater for a friend or me? Did I want cotton or wool? She listened.

She was patient. She guided me away from some products. She was kind, caring and helpful. She showed me exactly what I had in mind. I trusted this frail girl with a kind smile. She got my business

We all do business in very crowded marketplaces...not unlike Silk Alley. The competition is keen. Everyone knows the deep pocket customers. Most sellers want in their billfold. Venders seem to be OVERLY aggressive...just like Silk Alley.

The venders into today's marketplace have learned a few hot button phases that seem to resonate with many customers: **QUALITY. SUSTAINABILITY. FAST.**



I trusted this frail girl with a kind smile. She got my business.



But the words usually ring hollow. You just cannot TRUST those loud, pushy, unknown, flash-in-the-pan-merchants can you?

The lesson from old Peking: Be caring. Fit the customer's needs with your products and services. If you don't have what they want, tell them. Be respectful of the purchaser's time and space. Get to know the customer as a person and not only as a "deep-pocket." Trust is won over time. There is NOTHING immediate about it.

People love to buy and hate to be sold.

## A common quest

At the Society for Marketing Professional Services BUILD BUSINESS convention, held in August, one key issue surfaced over and over.

Firms all over the country expressed concern about attracting new employees. And the employees referred to are at all levels within the organization.


In many organizations, marketing departments are working with human resource staff to design campaigns. Attracting new staff is very similar to winning customers. A solid BRAND is very important. Trustworthy and readable information about the firm, its culture, and its benefits rates high. Employee referral systems tend to

produce the best source of new applicants. However, internal communications about the referral system must be repeated in a new and exciting way. The use of search firms is common and a growing trend, in spite of the high costs. A web presence is also important. Candidates want an easy to view site that list available vacancies. Provide an on-line application form, SMPS is expected to conduct additional research in this area in the near future.

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