

How I Raised Myself From Failure To Success: Some of Bettger's Secrets

—INSPIRATIONAL—

Bush League Baseball To Big Time Salesman; Career Told in Nutshell

Here are the personal experiences of one of the country's most successful men. The principles of his success can be applied by any man or woman in any business, says Dale Carnegie, noted consultant and author.

By Frank Bettger
SHORTLY AFTER I started out as a professional baseball player, I got one of the biggest shocks of my life.



That was back in 1907. I was playing for Johnstown, Pa., in the Tri-State League. I was young and ambitious—wanted to get to the top—and what happened? I was fired.

My whole life might have been different if I hadn't gone to the manager and asked him why he fired me.

The manager said he fired me because I was lazy! Well, that was the last thing I expected him to say.

"YOU DRAG YOURSELF around the field like a veteran who has been playing ball for 20 years," he told me. "Why do you act that way if you're not lazy?"

"Well, Bert," I said, "I'm so nervous, so scared, that I want to hide my fear from the crowd, and especially from the other players on the team. I hoped that by taking it easy, I'd get rid of my nervousness."

"Frank," he said, "it will never work. That's the thing that is holding you down. Whatever you do after you leave here, for heaven's sake, wake yourself up, and put some life and enthusiasm into your work!"

I had been making \$175 a month at Johnstown. After being fired there, I went down to Chester, Pa., in the Atlantic League, where they paid me only \$25 a month.

WELL, I COULDN'T FEEL very enthusiastic on that kind of money, but I began to act enthusiastic. After I was there three days, an old ball player, Danny Meehan, came to me and said: "Frank, what in the world are you doing down here in a rank bush-league like this?"

"Well, Danny," I replied, "if I knew how to get a better job, I'd go anywhere."

A week later, Danny induced New Haven, Conn., to give me a trial.

My first day in New Haven will always stand out in my memory as a great event in my life. No one knew me in that league, so I made a resolution that nobody would ever accuse me of being lazy.

FROM THE MINUTE I appeared on the field, I acted like a man electrified. I acted as though I were alive with a million batteries. I threw the ball around the diamond so fast and so hard that it almost knocked our infielders' hands apart.

Once, apparently trapped, I slid into third base with so much energy and force that the third baseman fumbled the ball and I was able to score an important run. Yes, it was all a show, an act I was putting on.

DID IT WORK? It worked like magic. My biggest thrill came the following morning when I read in a New Haven newspaper:

"This new player, 'Pep' Bettger, has a barrel of enthusiasm. He inspired our boys. They not only won the game, but looked better than at any time this season."

I mailed the newspaper clipping to Bert Conn, manager of Johnstown. Can you imagine the expression on his face as he read about "Pep" Bettger, the dub he'd tied a can to, three weeks before—for being lazy?

Within ten days, enthusiasm took me from \$25 a month to \$135 a month—an increase by income of 700 per cent. Let me repeat—nothing but the determination to act enthusiastic increased my income 700 per cent in ten days! I got this increase in pay not because I could throw a ball better—or catch a hit better, not because I had any more ability as a ball player.

TWO YEARS LATER, I was playing third base for the St. Louis Cardinals and had multiplied my income by 30 times. What did it? Enthusiasm alone did it; nothing but enthusiasm.

Two years after that, while playing against the Chicago Cubs, I had a bad accident. Picking up a swinging bunt while on a full run, I attempted to throw in the opposite direction. Something snapped in my arm.

That accident forced me to give up baseball. This seemed like a great tragedy to me at the time, but I now look back on it as one of the most fortunate events of my life.

I returned home, and for the next two years made my living as collector for an installment furniture concern. After two dismal years I decided to try selling insurance.

THE MAGIC OF Enthusiasm worked for me in selling and in business, just as it had in baseball. I would not want to give anybody the impression that I think enthusiasm consists of fist-pounding. . . . but if fist-pounding is what you need to arouse yourself inside, fine. I am overwhelmingly for it. I know that: When I force myself to act enthusiastic, I soon feel enthusiastic.

During my 32 years of selling, I have seen enthusiasm double and triple the income of dozens of salesmen, and I have seen the lack of it cause hundreds of salesmen to fail.

Enthusiasm is by far the highest paid quality on earth, probably because it is one of the rarest; yet it is one of the most contagious.

If you are enthusiastic, your listener is very likely to become enthusiastic. Without enthusiasm



WHEN THE DOCTOR told Frank Bettger he could never play baseball again, he left the major leagues to become one of America's top salesmen.



FRANK BETTGER at his desk. "Try looking straight into the face of the next person you meet with eager, absorbed interest (even if it is your own wife)."

ness of being a good listener, showing the other person you are sincerely interested in what he is saying, giving him all the eager attention and appreciation that he craves and is so hungry for, but seldom gets!

Try looking straight into the face of the next person who speaks to you, with eager, absorbed interest (even if it is your own wife), and see the magic effect it has both on yourself, and the one who is doing the talking.

There is nothing new about this. Cicero said, 2,000 years ago: "There is an art in silence, and there is an eloquence in it, too." But listening has become a forgotten art. Good listeners are rare.

ALL OF us would profit by utilizing this prayer every morning: "Oh Lord, help me to keep my big mouth shut until I know what I am talking about. . . . Amen."

There were many times when I could have kicked myself in the teeth for talking on and on, when I should have been able to see the man wasn't listening, but my mind was so intent on what I was saying that it took too long for me to get it through my thick head that he wasn't paying attention.

Many times there is a parade of thoughts passing across the mind of a man, and unless we give him a chance to do some of the talking, we have no way of knowing what he is thinking.

Experience has taught me that it is a good rule to make sure the other fellow does a liberal share of the talking in the first half. Then when I talk I am more sure of the facts and more likely to have an attentive listener.

We all hate to be outsmarted, outwitted, interrupted, cut off before we finish, by some blabbermouth who knows what we are going to say before we say it.

You know the kind; he throws his mouth into high gear before his brain is turning over, explains to you where and why you are mistaken, and straightens you out before you can make yourself clear.

By that time, you feel like straightening him out with a left and right uppercut to the chin!

THE MOST powerful word in the English language, I believe, is the little word "why"—but it took me years of stupid stumbling to find it out.

It was one day when a friend of mine invited me to lunch with him, that I really learned the power of this miracle-performing word.

My friend's name is James C. Walker, president and principal owner of Gibson-Walker Lumber Company, Philadelphia.

After we ordered lunch Jim said: "Frank, I'll tell you why I wanted to see you. Recently I went down to Skyland, Virginia, on a stag party. We had a great time. We all sleep on cots at night in a large, one-room cabin.

WELL, THE first night, instead of going right to sleep, we started talking back and forth. One by one they fell asleep until, finally, I was the only one left talking.

Every time I stopped talking the fellow next to me would say: "Why, Jim? Why—and like a fool I would go on, and go into more detail, until he snored. Then I realized he had been trying to see how long I could talk!"

We both let out a big laugh.

"Right there," Jim went on, "it suddenly occurred to me that here was the way I bought my first life insurance. I don't know whether you realized what you were doing, Frank, but the first time you called on me, I told you that I was going to tell you the same thing I told every other insurance salesman who came to see me: 'I don't believe in life insurance.'"

"INSTEAD OF launching into a long argument, like other salesmen did, you merely asked, 'Why?'"

"As I explained why, you encouraged me to keep on by repeating, 'Why, Mr. Walker?'"

"The more I talked the more I realized that I was on the wrong side of the argument. Finally I convinced myself that I was wrong.

"You didn't sell me. I sold myself. But I never knew just how it happened until that night I talked too much down at Skyland."

"Now, Frank, the point of the story is this: Since I got back, I've sat in my office and sold more lumber, right over the telephone, than I ever sold before, just by asking 'Why?' So I wanted to tell you know in case you didn't already know how you sold me my first policy."

Jim Walker is one of Philadelphia's most successful lumbermen and a busy man. I have always been grateful to him for taking me aside to make me realize that I never did before the power of this little word "why."

I am amazed that many business people are afraid to use it.

I TOLD this story in our lecture courses a few years ago, and had salesmen and others in various fields of activity all over the country tell me how they started using "why" the next day, and how it helped them.

and now I wanted to try the major. The first "big shot" call I made was on Archie E. Hughes, president of the Foss-Hughes Company of Philadelphia. He was one of the leaders in the automobile industry on the Eastern seaboard. Mr. Hughes was a busy man. I had tried several times to get in to see him. Finally I got an appointment.

AS HIS secretary ushered me into his luxurious office I became nervous. My voice trembled as I began to speak. Suddenly I lost my nerve completely and just couldn't go on.

There I stood shaking with fear. Mr. Hughes looked up in astonishment.

Then, without knowing it, I did a wise thing, a simple little thing that turned the interview from a ridiculous failure to success. I stammered, "Mr. Hughes . . . I . . . uh . . . now that I'm here, I'm so nervous and scared I can't talk!"

Even while I spoke, to my surprise, my fear began to leave me.

My dazed head cleared, my hands and knees stopped shaking. Mr. Hughes suddenly seemed to become my friend. He obviously was pleased that I should regard him as such an important individual.

A kindly expression came over his face as he said, "That's perfectly all right. Take your time. I've felt the same way myself many times when I was a young man. Sit down and take it easy."

HE TACTFULLY encouraged me to go on by asking me questions. It was apparent if I had an idea which he could use, he was definitely going to help me make the sale.

I didn't sell Mr. Hughes, but I gained something which later proved to be far more valuable than the commission I would have made on that sale. I discovered this simple rule. Here it is: "When you're scared . . . admit it."

This fear complex of being afraid to talk to important people I thought was due to a lack of courage. I was ashamed of it. I tried to keep it a secret. I have learned

since, however, that many successful men, prominent in public affairs, are haunted by the same fears.

As I look back on it now, I realize what a fool I was, how many times I failed to take advantage of opportunities, because I was afraid to talk to important people. Calling on Archie Hughes was an important step in my selling career.

I dreaded to go in to see him, and was terrified when I got in. If I hadn't admitted I was scared I would have gone out of there whipped!

That one experience helped me to get into a higher income bracket. It showed me that this man really was a simple, approachable man, after all.

I HAVE been surprised to find that many of the ideas I've used in my business, I first learned in baseball.

For instance, while I was playing with Greenville, S. C., the manager, Tommy Stouch, said to me one day: "Frank, if you could only hit the big-league clubs would be after you."

"Is there any way I could learn to hit?" I asked.

"Jesse Burkett was no better hitter than you," declared Tom. "Yet he became one of the greatest hitters in baseball!"

"How did he ever do that?" I asked, doubtfully.

"BURKETT MADE up his mind he was going to learn how to hit," said Tommy. "So he went out to the ball park every morning and hit three hundred balls. He paid some boys a few nickels to chase them while one boy pitched 'em up. Jesse didn't try to slug the ball, but he practiced a free, smooth swing, until his timing became perfect."

That story sounded too good, I had to see it for myself. So I looked up the records: Only two players ever had batted over 400 in more than one season. One of them was Lajoie. The other was Jesse Burkett!

I got so excited about the idea I tried to get a few of the other players on the team to try it with me, but they told me I was crazy.

BUT MY roommate, Ivy "Reds" Wingo, a catcher from Norcross, Ga., said he'd like to try it. So we got hold of some boys who were glad to earn a few nickels, and went out early every morning. Reds and I each hit three hundred balls.

We put some pretty big corns on our hands, but outside of that, it didn't hurt us a bit, and we had a lot of fun doing it.

That summer Reds and I were both sold to the St. Louis Cardinals.

Now what has that got to do with your business? Just this: Ten years later after I gave up baseball, and had been selling for a couple of years, a big, handsome Southerner named Fred Hagen, was transferred from our company's Atlanta office, to Philadelphia.

Fred had a million-dollar smile and personality, but all his selling experience had been among Southern farmers, so he had to develop some new sales talks. He began practicing them on me.

NOT LONG before he died, Knute Rockne, famous football coach of Notre Dame gave one of the most practical messages I've ever read. Here was his conclusion: "You can't develop perfection by looking in your mirror and congratulating your company for looking you on. You've got to DRILL and DRILL and DRILL."

That's what saved John Barrymore from wanting to quit, helped him to be acclaimed the great Hamlet of his day.

That's what raised Jesse Burkett from a weak hitter to one of baseball's immortals.

Yes, that's what helped me get out of the minors and put me in the majors in baseball, and in selling.

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