

Glenn,

With summertime rapidly approaching, I can't help but think of my five summers in the hot sun of the bookfield. This was generally the time of year that my stomach would get a little queasy, my palms a little sweaty and my bank account a little empty. Please wish the crew all the best. Although I haven't sold in 8 summers, I find that I still apply principles and lessons that I learned in the living rooms of Mrs. Jones. As you may know, I am finishing my training in Family Medicine this summer. Throughout medical school and residency it has been really amazing how much I use "sales" every day. For instance, just getting into medical school can be quite a challenge. No matter how good your grades, test scores and resume may be, acceptance hinges on interviewing with and impressing two or three members of the admissions committee. If you are unable to connect with and impress these individuals, then you'll have to "try again next year". I had a friend in medical school that graduated magna cum laude but didn't get in until his sixth try! Needless to say, my friend had a hard time "selling" himself.

Although I don't use a memorized sales talk anymore, I find that I have to "make my pitch" in every exam room. People come to the doctor for a number reasons- pain, illness, pressure from family or, sometimes, just plain boredom. Whatever the motivation, my job is to identify their needs, both obvious and unrecognized, and help them to improve their lives through better health. It's certainly not easy to get people to quit smoking or lay off the donuts, but I try to figure out what will motivate them to change. My summers on the bookfield certainly taught me a lot about helping people see their needs and encouraging them to do something about it.

It's funny but the skill that I use most is the ability to read people. With all the medical training and knowledge that I have gained, it is useless if the patient doesn't "get it". I am constantly watching people's body language and the tone in their voice to figure out what they are really thinking. For instance, when we "round" in the hospital one of our faculty will often go in with us to discuss things with a patient. Not infrequently, I see puzzled or even frightened looks on the patients' faces. Although the rest of the medical team are often oblivious to this, I can tell that patients are confused and so I go try and explain things again in terms that they understand. They really appreciate it. It's funny to think back about times when Mrs. Jones gave me those looks. I knew I'd better "slow down" and "keep it simple" if I hoped to make a sale.

These are just a few examples of ways the book business shaped my future. I am constantly reminded of the impact in my professional and personal life. I wish you and the gang all the best. Please remind them that the things they think are most significant now will likely become insignificant in just a few years (e.g. "cool cards", summer school, etc). Building your character and developing good habits is a lifelong process. It's a Great Day to be a Bookman...

Sincerely,

Nick Thornton, MD