

The Rosetta Story: by Tim Sanders, visit <http://www.timsanders.com>

What is love in business? Love is a matter of sharing your knowledge, your network of relationships, and your compassion-or any combination of the three. I have learned this lesson many times in life, and I learned it again last week at the DFW International Airport when I decided my shoes were dirty.

After missing my flight to San Jose, I realized my shoes were scuffed and needed a shine. So I wandered over to the shoe shine stand, where a young lady named Rosetta greeted me and got right to work. While polishing, she asked if I was a businessman, to which I proudly said, "Yes!" She then shared with me her desire to run a business of her own some day. She explained that she was a single parent of three kids and she wanted to control her destiny as well as their future. She complained that business owners make all the money, and that she had more to offer than just a shine on shoes.

I immediately stopped reading the paper. I related to her aspirations. I looked in her right in the eyes and saw ambition, dignity, and fire. Thinking about the knowledge I could share with her, I suggested she read Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People." I thought this book would give her a good perspective on people and business. I told her about Entrepreneur magazine, and all of the business opportunities in each issue. I also talked to her about her current business; running the household and running that stand.

"You have your own profit and loss statement, your own staff, and your own mission (to raise your kids). Basically, you're You Inc.!" She understood my point, smiled, and talked to me about how she makes decisions regarding spending money on education versus entertainment, and she talked about the investment value of renting versus owning her home. We agreed that everyone except total recluses conduct business, which means that everyone is a businessperson. The only difference is that the owner of the stand, for example, has a different set of problems--payroll, taxes, insurance, rent--than someone like Rosetta. So maybe, just maybe, she should study business first, and take the plunge with eyes wide open. I could tell she was enthused and I felt great taking a few minutes to talk with her, about her.

The day before I'd left on this trip my publisher sent me a hundred promotional flyers for my book to hand out whenever possible. As Rosetta finished my shoes, I had a brainstorm: I'll hire her to pass out some of these flyers to her customers! The flyers had the book cover, my picture, and a description of the book as well as my concept of love in business. So I gave Rosetta a big tip and asked if she'd help pass out these flyers, explaining to her that her stand was a powerful place to market a business book, and that she came in contact with powerful business people.

Rosetta was delighted. "I'll do you better, " she said. "I know all the stores managers in the airport as well as other shoe shine stand operators. I'll give them some too. So please, may I have the entire stack?"

An hour later, running to my gate, I passed Rosetta's stand where I saw her giving a flyer to one of her clients and talking up the book. She looked happier, she looked more fulfilled; her eyes were on fire!

The following week, I was running through DFW once more and noticed one of my flyers taped to a shoe shine stand--not Rosetta's. When I ducked into a newsstand to get a copy of the Wall Street Journal, the cashier smiled at me and after some fumbling under the counter, produced another copy of the flyer. Actually, it was a copy of a copy--Rosetta was adding value and spreading the word. Good people were working hard for me, people whom I've never even met. The cashier wished me luck and told me that she couldn't wait to display and sell the book.

All in all, I've learned that EVERYONE is powerful, EVERYONE has a story to tell, and EVERYONE is a business person. By sharing knowledge and compassion with Rosetta, I achieved word of mouth marketing in one of the most important nodes of the business world--an international airport. I learned through notions like Seth Godin's "Unleashing the Ideavirus" that people who travel can be very powerful sneezers, influencers, and gospel spreaders. I received an incredible return on investment for my time, compassion, and payment to Rosetta.

Don't let your next Rosetta slip by. She may be the bright spot in your day--your number one teammate in the business of life.