

The Courage to Ask for Help

We had an auto dealer client who faithfully attends a dealer group. However, Larry had a problem. Another dealer in his territory who sold the same product had hired away his general manager, who in turn had hired away three additional key employees. They had also taken a computer copy of his customer list and were now contacting his customers, inviting them to the competing dealership.

My immediate reaction was to initiate legal action and apply for an injunction to stop the competitor from using the list to contact his customers. Larry was horrified at the thought of suing another dealer of the same manufacturer. He initially refused to consider that course of action.

As it turned out, a group dealer meeting was coming up within a week. I asked if he had discussed this problem with them.

“No, I haven’t. I’m too embarrassed to.”

“Embarrassed is no excuse not to protect your business,” I exclaimed.

I made him promise to discuss this problem.

Larry called me on his way home from the dealer meeting. He had brought up the problem and the group was not only unanimous in support of him but emphatic that he take legal action immediately. In fact, two of the dealers said they would call him within a couple of days to make sure he had engaged a lawyer.

Did I know a good lawyer?

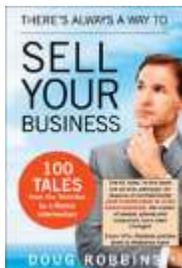
We arranged a meeting with a litigation lawyer within a couple of days. A computer expert was brought in to determine how the customer list was removed and by whom (believe it or not, this can be done). And a lawsuit was initiated against each of the former employees and the competitor.

It was determined that the former service manager was the culprit who took the customer list from the computer.

Within a relatively short period of time, a large cash settlement was agreed on. The customer list was returned. Copies were destroyed. And a covenant not to approach any more of Larry’s employees was issued. Within six months all of the employees who had been poached by the competitor were no longer working there.

Three of them had asked for their old jobs back, but none was rehired.

To this day, I don’t believe my client would have taken legal action, no matter how much I insisted, without the encouragement of his dealer group.



This story is from Chapter 16 of Doug Robbins’ book “**There’s Always a Way to Sell Your Business**”

To purchase a copy for only \$19.95 (including shipping), please call 1-888-762-2463.