

John Sproson remembered

John Sproson, an SF practitioner and enthusiast from the early days of SF in organisations, passed away this year. He is remembered by the SOLworld community (<http://bit.ly/ZZA6c1>) and SFCT community as a supportive, enthusiastic, welcoming, generous man with a great sense of humour, always impeccably dressed and helpful to “newbees” and “veterans” alike. He was always very respectful and “curious not furious” when he disagreed as can be read in his posts in the archives of the SOL-listserve. In his illness he showed great courage and dignity. He inspired us by his will to carry on and to take one step at a time. He was able to lead his daughter down the aisle last year, which had been one of his goals. He was also involved in the Pancreatic Cancer UK charity, giving hope to others with the diagnosis and advocating improvements to early diagnosis.

John’s contribution to SF practice in the area of “SF Sales” should not be underestimated. SF practitioners tend to be idealistic, friendly people who like listening and being helpful – for some this meant they had a natural aversion to salesmanship. John was incredibly helpful in showing us that the SF virtues are actually great assets in the sales process.

His first SF publication, an article in “Solution Focused Management”, published after the SOLWorld conference in Vienna in 2006, describes how John was able to use SF in a workshop with a team of Business Advisors. These advisors had degrees in chemistry, physics etc. and were similarly uncomfortable in selling their university’s services to businesses. Again, John was able to “build on what is there” and helped them “to identify what was currently working and building on it” (2006, p. 193).

For his workshop on SF Sales at the SOLWorld conference in Cologne in 2008, John had developed the connection between SF and Sales further and showed us the “SF Sales cycle” – a backward sales cycle which starts with a qualified customer who determines his or her need together with the

consultant rather than starting with the consultant “creating a need” for the customer.

His 2010 book “The ABC of Sales Lead Generation” is a treasure box for people starting their own business. John walks you through all the steps of generating leads, inspires confidence that this is something you can do and generously shares all the tools of the trade. He starts by asking: “What makes you so different?” and invites you to define your niche, your brand, your customers and your goals and targets. The descriptions are incredibly down-to-earth and practical and can be followed by anyone. He then goes on to help his readers design their own lead generation process: defining your marketing funnel, feeding it via internet, email marketing and joint ventures. Last but not least, he gives very practical advice on telemarketing and sales meetings. He says about network meeting (by which he means meetings “where you balance a plate and a drink and everyone exchanges business cards, not learning events and professional development): unless they are a haven for those who match the “customer profile”, my advice is – don’t go!” (2010, p. 49).

If you want to wave a last goodbye to a man who will be missed greatly by the SF community you can have a look at: <http://www.solworld.org/video/thank-you-for-the-retreat>

References

- Sproson, J. (2006). ‘Using Solution Focus in an Effective Sales and Influencing Process’. In G. Lueger, & H.-P. Korn (Eds.), *Solution-focused management* (pp. 193–201). München: Reiner Hampp Verlag.
- Sproson, J. (2010). *The ABC of Sales Lead Generation*. Basingstoke: Sales Mentor Publishing.