

## From the Racetrack to the Fast Track

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I love watching that video from the 1986-87 IMSA International Sedan Racing Series, featuring car #55 and driver Al Benelli! "The older I get, the better I WAS." Racing professionally was, for me, the realization of a boyhood dream. For professional racecar drivers, the goal is to get the opportunity to stand on the winners' podium. Today, thanks to all of you, I get to share the best winner's podium of them all, the speaker's roster at MDRT, and to share my story with you.

But what can I share? What do I have to offer? I'm really challenged here! Let's face it. You are among the best in the business. You proved that by qualifying for, and coming to, this meeting.

You know your clients and your practice better than anyone. You have a unique style, or at least you're in the process of developing one. If I were to attempt to give you specific, detailed sales or management techniques that work for me, at least half of what I would say will be useless to you; and then your challenge will be to figure out which half.

What I'm going to do is share a few valuable and adaptable concepts that I learned during my 10 years as a professional racecar driver, concepts I believe you can take with you and apply according to your own personal style, not just in your financial service business but in just about any area of your life where you make the conscious choice to be a winner.

I call the first concept Change Something. See what happens. It involves making small, controlled changes to the way you usually do things and then, very important here, measure the results. This helps you determine whether you want to stick with the change. Let me give you an example.

Our team had just arrived in Watkins Glen, New York for the Kodak GT-500. Now that name might not mean much to you, but to us it meant one of the big races of the year and we were ready...or at least so we thought. The car was set-up according to the book, engine hot off the dyno making lots of horsepower, gears selected to match the power band of the engine, suspension set according to optimum tire temperatures, jack weights "perfect"

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balanced. Let me put all that in less technical, layman's terms; we had everything according to the book, right on the money. On paper, we should have been fast enough to qualify among the leaders. On the track, where it counts however, we were 3000 pounds of rolling junk. We weren't even going to get into that race at all unless we could find some way to reduce our lap times. We were in trouble and, trust me, we'd been there before.

That's when Rich Wilson, our crew chief, usually made the s-a-m-e suggestion, "Let's change something and see what happens." Drivers and fans call it, "Happy Hour." You Run Laps, You Make Changes, You Measure Results.

There are so many things that can affect the performance of a racecar, there are going to be times when you just can't seem to figure out why it's behaving the way it is: track temperatures, aerodynamics, the amount of rubber left on the track from the day or week before, tire compounds ...lots of stuff! It can be the same with life in general. Let's take your business. Sometimes even the best analysis in the world will not reveal why you look so good on paper but are still struggling to keep up. You have time management systems, best-practice policies, you've had the phone surgically attached to your head and you still can't seem to get your available appointment slots filled up. Change something and see what happens! You don't have to reinvent your entire practice. Small changes very often produce surprising results.

Each of the tires on our racecar starts out with about 25 lbs of air in them. That's 100 lbs total.

At Watkins Glen that year, the difference between just trying to go faster and possibly crashing into the barrier, wrecking the car AND our entire weekend ...and qualifying a respectable 14<sup>th</sup> for the race was ½-lb. air taken out of the left rear tire giving us a tad more grip in the right hand turns and nearly a full second quicker lap time. ½ lb = ½ of 1% of the air in the tires. Sometimes the smallest change makes a big, big difference.

Look at how it works in business. Change something! See what happens and remember small changes can make big differences.

If you use direct mail or pre-approach letters, try changing the look. Perhaps a change in the size, shape or even the color of your mailers will produce a different, better result.

How about the phone? Try changing the time of day and the days you call. Change your greeting, then measure the results. Ok, you get the idea for business.

How about your life? Is everything going exactly as you want it to? If so, you are a very lucky person. If not, you may just want to change something about the way you do things and see what happens. Does your family expect you to be glued to the TV set during football, hockey or some other sports season? What might happen if you were to take the kids out for ice cream on game day? Let your imagination run wild. Are there different results out there just waiting to be discovered?

### **Change something. See what happens!**

I believe everyone by now has heard the old phrase that the definition of "insanity" is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. The reason that phrase is an "old phrase" is it has stood the test of time. It's still true! Or, as my Grandmother would say, "You don't mix up a batch of oatmeal raisin cookies and keep baking them waiting for chocolate-chip. Until you change the recipe, the cookie stays pretty much the same."

Before this meeting is over, you will have had the opportunity to come in contact with hundreds of ideas for the "little" changes you could make to your business and to your life. Try one or two then see what happens.

### **The next concept is *Keep it simple.***

After the Watkins Glen race, I gave Rich Wilson, my crew chief, a thank you gift. I explained that it was a special pen that NASA had spent thousands of dollars to help develop. It could write upside down in a zero-gravity environment. Rich thanked me, looked at the \$40 pen, and then asked me why NASA didn't just use a pencil!

Keeping it simple; Rich knew that was a part of his job. And I learned from him.

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Then there was the episode of “The Cool Suit.” One of the problems race-drivers are faced with is heat. Even on a cool day, temperatures inside the car can reach 135 degrees Fahrenheit. At one race, an engineering company demonstrated a new device called a “cool-suit”. It consisted of a thin vest-like undergarment and a skullcap lined with small tubes through which cool water was circulated by an auxiliary pump located in a small, thermally-insulated reservoir unit that was mounted on the floor of the racecar to the right of the driver’s legs. It cost \$1,200 not including the auxiliary pump and the reservoir unit. I would have liked to have owned one but we were a team on a tight budget and cool-suits were a luxury.

On one particular race weekend in Riverside, California, track temperatures were over 105 degrees and temperatures in the car were sure to go above 135. Once again, our crew chief, Rich Wilson came up with the answer. He found a cotton mesh fishing-vest at a local sporting goods store that must have had at least 12 different pockets in it, into which he had stuffed plastic bags filled with ice cubes. It did the job for less than 20 bucks with little added weight.

We sometimes need to remind ourselves to keep things simple in our business as well. We want to avoid the belief that something has to be complicated in order to justify its value. We could learn to develop simple ways of expressing a problem in terms our client or prospect will understand and appreciate. “If your outgo exceeds your income, your upkeep becomes your downfall!” Isn’t that what we want our clients to know about cash flow management? Estate Planning is the ability to give WHAT you want, to WHOM you want, WHEN you want, the WAY you want. It doesn’t have to rival rocket science. Life Insurance is just one way to be certain that your life is worth more than your stockbroker’s car!

### **Keep it simple.**

In the movie, The Godfather, Marlon Brando said, “Make ‘em an offer they can’t refuse.” If we get too wrapped up in 17-page illustrations, multi-colored analysis charts, graphs and the like, we run the risk of making them an offer they can’t REMEMBER.

During this meeting you are going to have scores of opportunities to hear how the best in the business make simple conversation out of some of the complexities in our business. Do your best to pick up as many as you can. I got my most valuable sales tip right here in New Orleans in 1999 while sharing a beer with a gentleman from Wales. He explained how he gets referrals simply. He SIMPLY suggests to his client that they imagine they were to switch jobs. He gets to do the client’s job, and the client takes over his. With that in mind he asks what would be the first thing he would have to do in the morning as he arrives for work at the client’s (now his) workplace. After the client explains all the things he would have to do, he then gets his turn. “On this job, your first task would be to get three appointments. Who would you call?”

This room alone is filled with hundreds of ideas like that and any one of them could pay for the entire trip. How many you can you gather before you go home?

How about keeping things simple at home too! It doesn’t need to be complicated or expensive or wrapped in pretty paper to give a lasting gift to someone you love. It can be as simple as a kind word or an encouraging compliment. A kind word seldom goes unheard; the problem is that it often goes unsaid

### **Third Concept is *Make All Necessary Pit Stops!***

Sometimes the last thing a driver wants to do is come in off the track, especially if he thinks he can gain track position by staying out there. Unlike our own passenger cars, there’s no fuel gauge in a racecar. The gas sloshes around so much and is subject to such G-forces that the best way to tell how much you have left is to calculate it on a computer, something the driver just isn’t suited for. (It’s really hard to type with those Nomex gloves on). In addition to the fuel issue, there are those four things with the 25 lbs of air in them called tires. When you break it all down, a racecar driver is nothing more than a tire manager, applying the forces of acceleration, braking, turning, and gravity to four little rolling patches of hot rubber where tire meets track. Like pencil erasers on sandpaper these things wear out and before you can say “Honey, I think

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we're getting a flat tire," your new improved track position includes a conversation with your crew that starts off, "I just hit the wall, guys."

Knowing when to make pit stops is a crucial decision seldom left up to the driver. Most times, it's the crew-chief or car-chief's call. In fourteen seconds or so, a 3500 stock car can get 4 tires, 22 gallons of gas, a clean windshield and a suspension adjustment if needed. The driver gets a cool drink, lets the blood find its way back into his fingers and, on some low-budget teams, occasionally gets a fresh bag of ice to put into his fishing vest. Whenever we had a really good pit stop that gave us better track position, I bought the crew dinner. Wilson got a pencil!

In business and in our personal and family lives, we need to know when to make pit stops, either for fuel or tires or both. Fuel comes in many forms. Sometimes it's the energy renewal we get from taking a break from the daily routine, such as a vacation with the family or a round of golf with a friend. Sometimes it's the surge we get from an idea that found its way into our tank from book or tape. (They don't call it the "Power Center" for nothing.)

Tires are the things that help maintain a grip on the racecourse itself. They roll at the speed of the car so that the contact patch remains constant and consistent as the forces of the race are applied to them. What better way to describe the things we need to learn and keep pace with? Our professional organizations and MDRT keep us in contact with and help us maintain our grip on this challenging business. What you will EARN in this business will depend on what you can LEARN in this business.

How about our personal selves? Do we spend any of our resources giving ourselves a better "grip" on the race-track of life? Do we take time out, not just to recreate but also to renovate and innovate? Are we doing anything to insure that we are a stronger and more desirable product than we were last year? We would never think to invest in a company that did not do any research or development. The same goes for us as individual products on the shelves of society. Is it time to become "New and Improved"?

This meeting is an example of a super pit stop where we can get the fuel of motivation, the tires of education, a clearer windshield to see where we are going; and I understand you can also get a few pieces of ice at the Irish party.

Qualifying for MDRT and not coming to this meeting is like qualifying for the Daytona 500 and not coming in for fuel and fresh tires. How many of our friends and colleagues do just that? They may think they can't afford to make that stop, but let me tell you, nobody is going to win a race without fuel and tires, and nobody is going to win in this industry without MDRT. If you can help even just one of our brothers or sisters to qualify for and come to this annual meeting, you will have done a simple, yet powerful act of kindness and caring to one of our own.

### 4<sup>th</sup> Concept is ***"Keep Your Eyes on the Prize."***

Stephen Covey said "Begin with the end in mind" or, as Daryl Waltrip once said, "Nobody ever won a race by leading the first lap." What is the prize you want?

When you are calling prospects, the prize may be the appointment. When you are proposing a solution, the prize may be the close of the deal. But I want you to think about the bigger prize: the prize at the end of the race when it's the race of your life. What will your legacy be?

What will they say about you when they are all gathered at your funeral celebration? Will they be talking about your designations, your pile of unused continuing education credits, your investment portfolio or net worth statement? Or will they be talking about your personal values: the things you stood for, fought for and contributed to during the course of your life? You already make a difference in this world. Will you leave a mark on it as well? What will it be?

Perhaps some of you have seen the Steven Spielberg movie, Amistad. It's a great way to spend a quiet evening at home. Early in the film, the character Mr. Jolson, played by Morgan Freeman asks John Adams, played by Anthony Hopkins, how he can win the case, in court, of the rebellious slaves aboard the Amistad. Hopkins states it is his experience that the one who tells the best story

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usually prevails; and he then asks, "What is their story?" Freeman is a bit perplexed and answers that they are slaves from Africa.

"No" said Hopkins, "What is their story?"

Freeman appears like a deer in the headlights as Hopkins continues, "Where are you from, Mr. Jolson?"

"Georgia, sir!" Freeman replies.

"So" continues Hopkins, "is that your story? You're a Georgian? Does that about sum up who you are? No, I suspect not. You're a former slave who has pulled himself up by his bootstraps to become a respectable citizen, fighting prejudice and injustices and overcoming many hardships along the way, I suppose. That is your story. From what I can figure you and this so-called lawyer have managed to determine WHAT they are, they're Africans. Congratulations! But it would appear that neither of you know the first thing about who they are!"

Is that how we see our clients? Do we know "WHAT" they are without knowing their story? How much of a disservice do we do our clients by not taking the time to learn their story?

What about our own story? Could we tell another human being WHO we are without using the words that describe WHAT we are? Aren't we more than just insurance agents, or registered representatives? What is our story today? What will it be when we are done writing it?

Let's go back to the movie for a moment. Near the end, Cinque, the slave leader, is talking with Anthony Hopkins' character through an interpreter and he says, "I will reach back and call upon my ancestors to come and stand beside me. And my ancestors will come! They must come; for at this moment, I am the whole reason they existed at all!"

What will your life mean to those of your ancestors who came before you and existed just so you could be here today?

During this meeting you will hear about the wonderful work being done around the world by the MDRT Foundation and by individual MDRT members and guests. You will have the opportunity to become a part of those wonderful projects, to add them to your legacy, to your prize at the end

of your race. Don't put it off, because we don't always get to know how many laps we have left. Sometimes the checkered flag comes when we are not expecting it. Put yourself in the lead today and secure the place on the podium you want for yourself. Add a chapter to your story.

### Finally...

I want to share the fifth, and what I believe is the most important concept of all.

Despite the fact that there are many who would like to believe that racing is uniquely an American sport, it's not. All one need do is to look at the list of world driving champions and you begin to realize the huge contributions of the Europeans, Scandinavians, North and South Americans and others. It's impossible to deny the presence and even the dominance of names like Toyota, Honda, Mitsubishi, and new entries from Korea and other Asian countries. And even though the drivers, the cars, the tracks, the rules, and the fans differ greatly across the various types of motor racing series there is one common theme that seems to bind them all together.

As with perhaps no other sporting events, not only is there the recognition of country and national pride at the beginning of the race, with things such as the playing of a national anthem or a parade or festival, but almost without exception, there is an invocation, a recognition of and a call to a higher power to look favorably upon the proceedings and to perhaps even guide and protect those who are present.

Over my 58 years of living, which certainly include my 10 years of motor racing, I've developed a strong, personal belief that, while perhaps not held universally, I find that I must reinforce within **myself** each and every day. This personal belief of mine consists of two key elements:

Element Number One: **There is a "Higher Power" in the Universe**

Element Number Two: **It isn't me!**

In the Declaration of Independence drafted by the founding fathers of the United States of America, you can find the words, "**We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, ...that they are endowed**

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*by their creator with certain unalienable rights, ...that among these rights are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness”.*

For us in this wonderful industry, MDRT is a big part of that pursuit of happiness. From all parts of the globe, we are happy we qualified, we are happy to be here in New Orleans this week, and we have the opportunity to share in the joy of this experience.

Before every race there is a driver's meeting where the chief steward encourages the drivers and their crews to have a good, safe race and to avoid making the BIG mistake that causes the “big wreck.” The biggest mistake

we can make here is to under-estimate just how important each and every one of us is in determining what the legacy of this meeting will be for all the years to follow. How we exercise our right to the pursuit of happiness and interact with our colleagues will have a profound impact on the success of this meeting and on the memories that will leave here and be redistributed around the world. For most of us here today, and especially the first-timers, New Orleans MDRT 2005 has the potential to be a life-altering experience.

We are the Million Dollar Round Table. Ladies and Gentlemen — Start your engines!