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SYMPTOMS AND REMEDIES

How to counter waning career enthusiasm

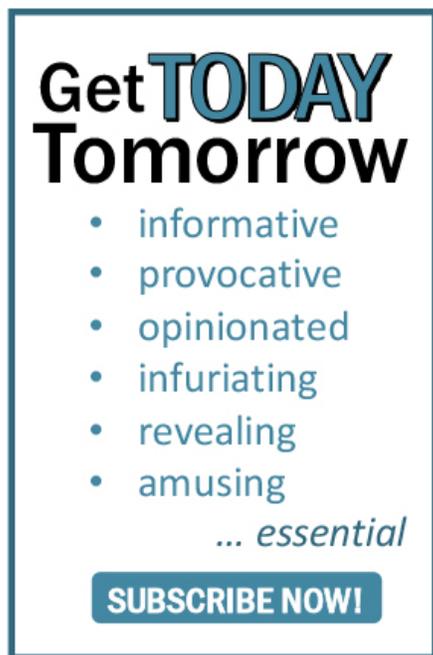
Steve Gillick

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05 MAR 018: Bob (see below) is only one of the problems that is grinding away at the enthusiasm that led you to the travel industry in the first place. You knew that you had to learn about destinations, legalities and different modes of transportation. You knew you had to master skills such as sales,

customer relations, communication, listening and decision making. But now all this information is under siege by the reality of working in the industry.



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When the challenge to use your knowledge to achieve positive results starts to wane, your career enthusiasm may suffer. You may feel there is no escape, but cheer up! Here are a few remedies for those telltale symptoms that may arise from time to time.

Symptom: If it's Tuesday it must be Bob. Like clockwork, at 10:00 am on Tuesday, Bob sends yet another lengthy email. Bob has been a client for the past five years and while he ends up taking precisely the same Luxury Caribbean vacation every year, he sends lots of emails asking questions about alternative destinations, flights, resorts, restaurants and activities. An email from Bob may take two hours to research and despite your detailed reply, another email arrives the next week. Bob is one of your dependable-high-commission-security-blanket clients so you don't want to do anything to upset him, but on the other hand, each

successive email is draining your energy and your enthusiasm, aside from obliterating your time management goals.

Remedy: Resist the temptation to send Bob an email to clarify his intentions. Duelling emails rarely result in a positive outcome even if they are polite and diplomatic. The solution is to pick up the phone and either have a conversation with Bob or set up a time to meet in person and chat about Bob's travel objectives.



Your goal is to understand why he keeps coming up with all these travel ideas when he ultimately ends up at the same resort on the same island, year after year. Personal meetings and phone calls are thought of as 'radical' or 'unconventional' methods of communication in this day and age but for some old timers (those above the age of 40!) it's a tried and true method to get to know a client and in this case, to agree on some guidelines for exploring alternate destinations. (What are your top ten travel destination wishes? How many of these do you actually consider to be realistic vacations? What would it take to get you to try out an alternate destination? If I spend the time to do the research would you seriously consider travelling to that destination?)

Symptom: Let's Play Jeopardy! Despite your years in the industry, one (or more) of your clients like to ensure that you know, that THEY know much more

than you. While you are tempted to tell them 'if you know so much why don't you make your own travel arrangements'? you know better from a customer service point of view. But also, despite their boastful and sometimes arrogant behaviour, the commission is good. Still, you are exhausted after dealing with the client and feeling somewhat bitter and inadequate.

Remedy: "Remember, the Force will be with you, always" (Obi Wan Kenobi). People are people and your job is not to change them but to work with them, provide information, clarify misunderstandings, be humble or assertive when appropriate, and be the consummate professional at all times.



Your "force" is your strength, and this force (some refer to this as your provenance) is the result of your background, education, training, experience and personality. Use this simple method when you need to have the 'force' with you. On a small, blank business card that you can keep in your wallet, write down your positive attributes: 85% average at Travel College, Europe Specialist, Cruise Specialist, 25 Fam trips, Top seller in 2017, Resolved the Johnson's trip to Peru during the airline strike, Thank you letter from the Smiths regarding their trip to Bali, Gave presentation on Travel Careers, My family, etc.

Then when you need a confidence boost, take out your card and 'remind' yourself who you are and how you got here. Like Luke in Star Wars, use the Force.

Symptom: It's Fam Trip Deja-Vu All Over Again. (Yogi Berra inspired) You love that Caribbean Island. Every time a Fam trip is announced; every time a new resort opens, you head to the island. After all, you decided a number of years ago to market yourself as a Specialist for this island. But while you are heartily greeted by the suppliers; while your opinion is sought and valued on tourism issues, while you rarely pay for anything during one of these trips, outwardly you are happy-go-lucky but inwardly you are bored to tears.

Remedy: There's a Big World out there. Use the travel specialist experience you gained in one country or region and apply it elsewhere. You are still the travel expert, but now you are expanding your repertoire. Think of it not only as a way of re-igniting your own enthusiasm, but also as an ingenious way of servicing those clients who may now be looking for something different.

In your next newsletter or 'catching up' eblast, note that "I love arranging Caribbean Island vacations for you, but I just returned from a very different island-Madagascar-where I had such an amazing experience. I've arranged an evening presentation to show my photos and talk about the country. Here's a video of me with one of the Lemurs we encountered..."

Symptom: I want to provide travel dreams-I didn't sign up to be a sales-person This is a common lament amongst travel students and entry level travel advisors. They regard 'sales' as the elephant in the room when it comes to travel industry

success. And they soon discover that when they don't, won't or can't ask for the sale, or when clients are reticent to buy what they are selling, then their career enthusiasm takes a hit.



Remedy: If you obey all the rules, you miss all the fun (Katharine Hepburn) The reality is that 'selling' is a crucial skill where the challenge is to demonstrate your positivity, knowledge, negotiation skills, powers of persuasion and personality. Seeing 'sales' as an energetic matching of the client's needs with product based solutions, is a way of getting past any negative 'sales' images in your mind. But the energy doesn't stop there. You can suggest upgrades (up selling) or alternate products/destinations (cross selling) or change of lifestyle vacations (adventure versus beach) or personal achievement escapades (selfie quests) to show your expertise at creative selling. Change the rules of the game and move 'selling' from the

perceived negative side, to the optimistic, fun and upbeat side of the travel industry.

Anyone can fall victim to waning career enthusiasm. The solutions presented here may not only help to re-invigorate your ambitions but may very well prevent your enthusiasm from waning in the first place. May the force be with you!



Steve Gillick

A tireless promoter of "infectious enthusiasm about travel", Steve delivers his wisdom once a month in his column *The Travel Coach*.