

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Sensation of a Smile

There is something sensational about a smile. It can light up the sky. It can lift the spirit. It can change those around you. It can change you. It's easier to sell yourself with a smile; it's a rough job without one.

One of the first lessons I learned when it came to selling yourself was this: Your face isn't only for eating, or for washing, or for shaving if you're a man, or for makeup if you're a woman. Rather, it was actually made to order for the greatest gift God ever gave a human being—a smile. Made to order? You bet. It takes a lot more muscles to make a frown than it does to make a smile.

The more muscle you use to put on a frown, the more "muscle" you'll get back from others. But, if you give a smile the odds are ten to one you'll get one back.

I have a little sign in my office right where I can look at it all day long. It reads: *I saw a man who didn't have a smile, so I gave him one.* I don't know who first said that, but I don't apologize for using it and I wish I could give him or her credit for the way it brings a smile to the lips of everyone who sees it.

Maybe that's why songwriters have written so many tunes about smiles. They tell us that when you smile the whole world smiles with you . . . that you should pack up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile . . . that there are smiles that make you happy . . . that you should let a smile be your umbrella . . . that you should smile, darn you, smile . . . and that when Irish eyes are smiling, they'll steal your heart away.

I've got news for that last songwriter. When Italian eyes are smiling, or German, or Spanish, or English, or Russian or Greek, or *anyone's* eyes are smiling, they'll do the same thing. A heart just isn't safe from theft.

That's giving a lot of credit to a smile, isn't it? But, why not? As I said, a smile can smooth out many a bumpy road when it comes to selling yourself. A grouch is going to get stuck in the ruts.

Let me tell you about some positive examples of smile power.

THE BLIND DATE WHO OPENED MY EYES

Quite a number of years ago, when I was seventeen, I double-dated with a buddy. The arrangement was the standard one. His girlfriend was going to line up her girlfriend for me. A grab bag. Anyone—man or woman, boy or girl—who's been fixed up with a blind date at some time in his or her life will understand at once the nervousness connected with it. What will the blind date be like? Will we hit it off? How did I ever get in a spot like this?

That night, so many years back, we drove in my friend's car to this girl's house. A honk of the horn and out comes my blind date. At first glance I thought she had to be the ugliest girl in the

history of the world. A real dog. My heart sank down around my socks.

But, when this girl got into the car and her girlfriend introduced me to her, she suddenly lit up that car with a smile that was simply terrific. Easily one hundred watts. Inside that first sixty seconds of meeting, that girl became the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. She kept up that smile all evening. It was in her eyes, in her voice, in her personality. I never had so much fun before as I did that night on that blind date.

Although I was blinded by her smile, she opened my eyes to just how sensational a smile can be. She sold herself by the sensation of a smile. To this day, I still remember it.

A REAL PROBLEM-SOLVER

Claudio Carlo Buttafava, an Italian like myself, is the general manager of the famous Savoy Hotel in London, which is now over one hundred years old. Buttafava is very efficient in his handling of the dozens of problems that crop up each day in a four-hundred-room hotel—problems regarding reservations, sleeping arrangements, linens, food service and often the temperament of the guests.

That's easy to understand when you realize that over the years the Savoy has put up (and still does) everyone from practically every walk of life: kings and queens, movie stars and opera singers, golfers and prize-fighters, generals and prime ministers and presidents.

As you can imagine, the dozens of details daily usually mean as many problems. As general manager, Buttafava not only has to supervise a large staff, from bellhops to bakers, from maids to musicians, he must also be a problem solver. Here's what he has

to say about it, as quoted by Israel Shenker in the *New York Times*, and his method is simple, his advice good for everyone:

"I smile a lot," Claudio says. "It comes from my character. You can always—or 90 percent of the time—avoid problems with a smile."

Now, you are probably saying, "Wait a minute, that's too easy, you can't solve problems with a smile." I say that you can because, as Claudio Buttafava learned, you solve problems best by avoiding them in the first place. The idea is to head off the problem before it happens. And a genuine smile, seen or simply *heard* in the voice, is a great head-offer. Selling yourself *first* can often keep a problem from popping up later on.

A SMILE NEVER DISAPPOINTS

Another example—an outstanding one—of a "smile in the voice" is that of Jimmy Launce. Jimmy is one of the most popular deejays in the metropolitan Detroit area. In fact, his popularity extends far beyond the limits of Detroit, because WJR, the radio station on which he was heard for over twenty years, was one of the most powerful in the Midwest. Jimmy's morning show was heard not only throughout both peninsulas of Michigan, but in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois. There have even been times when listeners in the Deep South have written to Jimmy, the man with the smile in his voice, to say that they have heard him and his genial program and to tell him they can see his smile over the airwaves.

It's true. Listening to his lighthearted, carefree commentary, one can literally see the smile that lights up Jimmy's features.

Jimmy is not only a producer known for his good taste, but he is a fine actor as well. Leading roles in such hits as *Private Lives*,

The Prisoner of Second Avenue, The Owl and the Pussycat, Don Juan in Hell, Don't Drink the Water, A Man for All Seasons, Our Town and *The Man Who Came to Dinner* have earned him a loyal and enthusiastic following.

When he is not appearing on stage, he likes to step before the audience and, in broadcast language, "warm the folks up." Because many of his audiences are made up largely of radio fans, he smiles and starts off by saying, "And *you* don't look like I thought you would either." But, that's not quite true. Jimmy tells me that one of the most frequent comments audience members make to him during the "afterglow" in the cocktail lounge, following each performance, is, "Jimmy, your smile is exactly like I imagine it when I listen to you on radio. I was afraid I'd be disappointed. I'm not."

A smile never disappoints. People ask Jimmy why he is always so cheerful. His secret is that he never tells others his troubles. Instead he always shows a genuine interest in people. "My job is to entertain," he says, "and to make life enjoyable for others. It starts with a smile, but, that smile must come from inside." It is no accident that Jimmy, successful in a highly competitive field, long had for his program theme song "Put on a Happy Face." He has put a smile in his voice to match his God-given talent and years of dues-paying experience. "Others will like you more when you smile," he says, smiling, "and besides; it makes you feel better. It doesn't cost anything and it earns dividends that no blue-chip stock could ever pay."

Jimmy Launce—proof of the sensation of a smile.

A SMILE THAT MELTS STEEL

A few years ago, Dolly Cole, wife of the then president of General Motors, said to me, "Joe, I'm the chairperson this year of the

March of Dimes campaign and we're having a number of celebrities in to help us on our drive. I'd like you to join us."

Although I didn't count myself a celebrity, I told her I would be honored to help out. Then, I added a condition. "I'll do it, Dolly, if you'll introduce me to your husband, Ed." I figured this was a reasonable request; after all, I'd been selling his cars for the better part of my career. Dolly smiled and agreed.

I'll never forget that occasion. When Dolly did introduce me he was in the company of Phil Donahue, the talk-show host. Dolly must have told him about me, because he turned to Donahue and said, "Phil, this is Joe Girard, the world's number-one retail car salesman. He's the guy who makes my assembly lines move!"

Who could top that for openers? But Ed, himself, did, because then he turned on a sensational smile as he shook my hand. It was a smile so big, so warm, so full, it could melt a piece of steel.

Now, he didn't have to sell himself to me. In a very real sense he was my "boss" at the time. But he sold himself with a smile, the same smile that moved him to success after success in the world's greatest automotive company. We became friends and remained so until his too-soon tragic death in an air crash.

A SMILE THAT MADE THE SALE

A couple of seasons back there was a gigantic boat show held at Detroit's Cobo Hall, the convention center which usually hosts the automobile show. Crowds came to look over, compare and buy every kind of marine craft you could think of—small sailboats to luxury cabin cruisers.

One day during the run of the boat show a fantastic sale was lost—and made. Here's what happened, as one salesman at my

workshop told me, and as it was reported on the business pages of the Detroit press.

An extremely rich man from one of the Middle East oil-rich countries was at the show. He stopped at one of the large boat displays, approached the salesman there and calmly said, "I want to buy twenty million dollars worth of boats." Now, that's something to make anyone put out the welcome mat—or so you'd think. Instead, the salesman is said to have looked at the prospect as if he was crazy, as if he was simply somebody who was taking up his valuable time. And the one thing his look didn't have was a smile.

The oil sheikh looked at the salesman, read his unsmiling face and walked away.

He went on to the next boat display and this time was greeted by an enthusiastic young salesman with a welcome-mat smile on his face. It was a smile as radiant as the sun in Saudi Arabia. That sheikh was being made to feel at ease and at home by that greatest gift God ever gave us—a smile. So, again he said, "I want to buy twenty million dollars worth of boats."

"Sure," said the second salesman, still smiling. "I'll show you our line." He did just that, but he had sold himself first; he had sold the world's greatest product before anything else.

This time the oil sheikh stayed put. He put down a five-hundred-dollar bill on deposit and said to the salesman, "I like people who show they like me. You have sold yourself to me with your smile. You're the only one here who has made me feel welcome. Tomorrow I'll be back with a certified check for the full twenty million."

The sheikh was true to his word. The next day he returned with his certified check, added it to his five-hundred-buck deposit and the sale was closed.

The salesman who sold himself first with a smile, and then his marine product, is said to have made 20 percent on that sale. He is probably set for life but I'll bet he won't stay idle. He'll go right on selling himself and smiling his way to success.

It is not known what the unsmiling first salesman is doing now.

Now, you and I know that it takes more than a smile to make a sale like that. It takes a good product, it takes product knowledge on the part of the salesman, it takes training and it takes a willingness to be of help. What really happened was that the lack of a smile on one salesman's face moved a ready-to-buy prospect over to competition.

How many sales of products, of services, of people have been lost—and made—that way? Think about it.

That happening at the boat show proves the words of a short poem I keep framed in my office. I don't know who wrote it but I'd like to share it. It's called *Good Business*, and one of its verses says:

*The reason people pass one door
To patronize another store,
Is not because the busier place
Has better silks or gloves or lace,
Or better prices, but it lies
In pleasant words and smiling eyes.*

Given at the right time, at the right place, a simple smile can work miracles.

Here are seven simple rules to follow if you want to get extra "smileage" out of life. Each of them will make it easier to sell yourself in any situation.

How to Get Extra "Smileage"

1. Smile when you don't feel like it.
2. Share only your positive thoughts.
3. Smile with your whole face.
4. Turn the frown upside down.
5. Exercise your sense of humor.
6. Smile out loud.
7. Don't say "cheese," say "I like you."

Although the seven rules are simple ones, they still take practice if you really wish to master them. Let's consider each one briefly.

First, *smile when you don't feel like it*. I put this rule first because it's probably the toughest one to follow. So, you ought to get a head start on it. Say to yourself that no matter how you may feel deep inside at a particular moment, that is, moody or blue, you're not going to let others know it. Keep your troubles to yourself. Make people believe you are having a wonderful time. It is better to have others ask "What has he or she got to smile about?" than to say "He or she has every right to wear a long face." In selling yourself, it is always better to keep them guessing.

One of the most famous paintings in the world, the Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci (a fellow Italian, by the way), which hangs in the Louvre in Paris, is known for the mysterious smile that plays about the woman's lips. For centuries, people have asked, "Why is she smiling?" No one knows the answer and no one ever will. But why do people flock by the thousands each year to see this work of art? Not because of the artist. Not because it has been stolen several times, cut from its frame, but luckily found again.

Not because of the coloring or the brush strokes. Not because of the model who posed for it. No, it is because people are fascinated by the smile.

It's a good rule to follow. Keep them guessing—and the best way to do that is to keep smiling even when you don't feel like it. Whenever you feel the least like smiling is the time to smile the most. It has often been said that the Mona Lisa smiles because her heart is breaking. But, if that is really true, she's not letting anybody else know it.

Second, *share only your positive thoughts*. And, spread them around. Like so many other things that are positive, a smile is very contagious. When you smile, people think you feel good and are happy. Soon they're smiling with you. It's practically impossible to smile if you go around putting out negative vibes. There are a number of things to remember about this rule: Spread only good news; stop discussing stories in the papers that deal only with crime and violence; instead, talk about the positive things that are happening in your community; do things that will gladden the hearts of others, not depress them; and if you can't say something good about someone, keep your mouth shut.

The sooner you start sharing only positive thoughts with others, the sooner you'll discover that a smile just goes along with them like eggs with bacon. And, speaking of eggs, as the song says, keep your sunny side up.

Third, *smile with your whole face*. A beautiful smile doesn't belong to the lips alone. A smile also means eyes that twinkle, a nose that wrinkles and cheeks that crinkle. A good smile covers the whole map and is a delight to see. It's almost impossible not to smile right back.

The entire state of Michigan, my state, knows the sensation of the full-face, million-dollar smile that belongs to its former governor, William Millikin. His face simply lights up. Sure, it takes more than a smile to win elections (and his reelection to the governor's seat in 1978 was by the largest vote, a landslide, ever in Michigan), but Bill Millikin knows it certainly helps. Nobody can warm a Michigan winter as he can with his ready, eager, sincere smile. Spread all over his face, his smile inspires people with confidence. It causes people to trust him.

Another full-face smiler, one who owes a great deal of his success to his smile, is Robert Binsfield. For a long time Bob was an instructor at the five-hour workshop. Every eight weeks he faced a new group of salesmen/students who were eager to learn how to sell themselves and, at the same time, learn how to do a better job of selling their products.

On their first day, their first hour, those students are not sure of what to expect. This is a new experience for most of them. Some are uneasy, some are slightly skeptical, some are eager to "get on with it," and some are worried about getting up and participating. I have never seen anyone put a group at ease as quickly as Bob could, with his wide, happy-face smile. It's a smile that says, "Trust me, have confidence in me, I am your friend." He warmed the group at once. His smile sold him as an instructor before he ever said one word of instruction. Bob and his smile give my workshop an extra plus.

Fourth, *turn the frown upside down*. When you do, it becomes a smile. But again, it takes practice.

Frank Bettger, author of *How I Raised Myself from Failure to Success*, tells that as a young man he was a sourpuss. A first-class, number-one frown. He also knew that, if not corrected, his frown

would spell sure failure in everything he set out to do. His boyhood had been touched by so much sickness, hunger and misfortune that, in his words, there wasn't much to smile about. In fact, he says, the family was actually afraid to smile and act happy. He grew into a sourpuss.

Then he decided that if he wanted to be a success he'd have to change his attitude and overcome the handicap that worry and hardship had written on his features: a permanent scowl, a frown. He set to work, absolutely determined to wear a big, happy smile, to turn the frown upside down, to make it an honest smile, from deep inside, one which would reflect an inner happiness and an inner goal. He was going to do more than just put on a happy face; he had to take off the unhappy face first.

It wasn't an easy thing to do. As soon as Frank had fears and worries, the smile would disappear. Fears, like frowns, and smiles just don't go together. Still, he kept at it. From a fifteen-minute workout of smiling at the start of each day, he carried the exercise into the day itself. Before entering an office, a room, a situation, he'd think of reasons to smile, of things he was thankful for, and he'd turn the frown upside down into a smile. What happened, of course, was that this became habit forming. Working at happiness created a face of happiness. Working at smiling began to create the feeling of happiness inside. Good results began to show up more and more in his business, socially and at home.

Frank Bettger says: "You can cultivate happiness with a smile. Try it just for thirty days. Give every living soul you meet the *best* smile you ever smiled in your life, and see how much better you feel and look. It's one of the best ways I know to stop worrying and start living."

Turn that frown upside down!

Fifth, *exercise your sense of humor*. You have one even if you don't think you have. Admit it, you enjoy a good joke as well as the next person—and I don't mean off-color jokes or practical jokes at the expense of other people. I mean a good, really funny story.

The more you respond to them the more you exercise your sense of humor and the more you'll be smiling. That doesn't mean you need to be able to tell a good joke—some people just can't; you know the type, they always manage to louse up the punch line. But, it does mean to let yourself go. If you've heard the joke before don't spoil it for the teller, keep your mouth shut and smile all over again. Try to see the humor in situations and respond to it. Don't be a tease, because teasing isn't funny and it usually hurts the other person—no matter what you've heard, people don't enjoy being teased, especially young people. But here are two good tips about exercising your sense of humor: one, smile and roll with it when the joke's on you and, two, smile *with* the other person, never *at* him or her.

Sixth, *smile out loud*. If a smile is sensational, then a good, hearty laugh is super sensational. A laugh is an out-loud smile. Have you noticed how contagious a laugh is? Go to the movies to see a good comedy. Someone in the audience starts laughing. It's picked up by somebody else. Soon the whole theater is rocking with laughter. Later, you may see that same comedy on TV in the privacy of your living room. You may smile now at the same jokes, even chuckle, but laughing in private is harder to do.

Smiling out loud takes practice, too. The next time you smile, turn it lightly into a chuckle. And when you feel like a good belly laugh, don't hold back, let it come out. You'll enjoy it, so will others. Laughter is one of the finest exercises in the world. It does

wonders for your body. Laughing until your sides ache is pain that really doesn't hurt. Nobody has ever been harmed by his ability to laugh; instead people have sold themselves to success with a hearty laugh. Two people come to mind at once, Phyllis Diller and Carol Channing. Take a minute to think about it and you'll come up with a lot more.

And, seventh, *don't say "cheese," say "I like you."* Ever since the invention of the camera, photographers have said "say cheese" when they wanted the subject to smile. The word "cheese" just seemed to bring the corners of the mouth up into a smile.

I've learned that the words "I like you" bring a smile that's even bigger.

Sometimes, during a lecture, I try this little experiment. I call two people from the audience to join me on the stage or platform. Before I tell you about this experiment, let me also tell you that when I was actively selling cars I used to begin the sale this way. I knew that most new-car buyers are a little fearful. They know they're making one of the largest investments of their lives, second only to buying a house. They are about to spend a lot of money and they've got a right to be nervous. They want and need to be put at their ease.

So, the first thing I did was to smile and hand the prospect a big, round lapel button that read: "*I Like You!*" The prospect would look at it and in just a second or two he'd start to smile. He was pleased at what I'd done. He'd start to relax and would begin to feel more comfortable.

You know, it's hard to say "I Like You" aloud or even in print without smiling and getting a smile right back.

As I branched out from selling cars into other fields, I found the "I Like You" technique worked just as well. So I started to use

it while lecturing. As I said, I'd use a couple of volunteers from the audience. I still do.

I give each one a mask to wear, exactly the same mask, one with absolutely no expression on the face at all. Then, I ask the audience which of the two people on the stage they like the best, which of the two do they warm up to. Almost always, the answer is the same. Neither one. The masks are without expression. There is no choice between them.

Then, I ask the volunteers to remove their masks. Now we have two separate personalities on the stage, two different faces. I ask one volunteer to fold his arms, scowl and say nothing. I ask the other to open his arms wide, smile and say "I Like You" to the audience.

Next I ask everyone in the audience, "Now, which of these two people do you respond to the most?" The answer is always the same: They pick the smiling "I Like You" person and he wins hands down.

A stunt? Sure. But, it serves to break the ice for what I do next. I ask the audience members to turn to each other and say "I Like You" once or twice out loud. When they do, the smiles light up the auditorium like a searchlight.

Saying "I Like You" is one of the easiest ways to make a smile. This country of ours has a physical fitness week each year. I think we should have a national "I Like You" week.

Seven simple rules. Try them.

Remember the famous catch line that swept the country? "Smile! You're on Candid Camera!"—Alan Funt's great TV show which had started out as "Candid Microphone."

What a wonderful world it would be—and how much better we'd do at selling ourselves successfully—if we went through life

never quite sure if we were on "Candid Camera" or not—but, just in case we were, we'd better smile.

It's a great thing to be caught with your smile showing!

Things to Do NOW!

- Put this little sign up where you can see it: *I saw a man who didn't have a smile, so I gave him one.*
- Be sure to do it every time you see an unsmiling face.
- Try smiling away problems before they happen. At least it will help in keeping small problems from becoming big ones.
- Practice putting a smile in your voice. The easiest way to do this is to smile when you speak. People who can't *see* you will hear the *smile* all the same.
- Stand in front of a mirror and practice smiling with your whole face. Smile with your eyes, spread out that grin. You may feel silly at first and you may laugh out loud. If you do, that's great.
- Decide to make your smile your welcome mat to everyone.
- Put the seven "extra smileage" rules to work. You'll be amazed at how they help you sell yourself.