

Retirement Idea Becomes A Reality And A COVID project

BY: **DAVE PATRIARCHE**

In November and December 2019, before we even knew what COVID was, I thought it might be a good time to jot down a few ideas that could be used when I wrote my first book. There was no immediate intent to carry through with that, but I like to ‘get stuff down on paper.’ I thought it might be something to finish in my retirement years. The idea for the book was to share some of my learnings from 25 years in the business – the things I learned late, that could have helped me immensely had I only learned them earlier. One or two ideas in my head quickly turned into a list of about 20 ending up on paper. The idea paused there without a second thought.

Over the Christmas holidays 2019, our family travelled to Vienna, Austria, to visit my son and his then-girlfriend (now wife) for the holidays. I found myself with some spare time in airport lounges and hotel rooms where I added to those first ideas. I included a few vacation and business story ideas and started to flesh out the concept and format of what the project might look like if it were ever finished. This effort continued into the new year and before I knew it, I had a rough draft of a book.

I gave that first draft to my wife Joanne to review on her trip to The Gambia in February. I thought there would be no wi-fi, so she might have a chance to read it and share her thoughts. She came back saying it was pretty okay, which is high

praise as she is my toughest editor. She is always proofing my work and trying to make me better. I had an inkling that maybe this might not wait to retirement.

We headed off to St. Martin for a bare-boat sailing trip in March 2019 and I found more time to build out the story. Then the world shifted on its axis, with the pandemic racing across the globe creating havoc. We got back to the marina

to write. It provided a distraction, so I edited and re-edited, added and removed sections, and overall worked to make the book a bit smaller, tighter, and easier to read.

I started to look for a Canadian publisher in the spring of 2020 and decided on Friesen Press based in Victoria, BC, to publish the book. We started a dialogue, entered into a contract, and, before you know it, we had versions running back and forth as the editing process began. By September, we were reviewing final proofs; confirming cover art and photos; and starting to talk fonts, paper stock, and print runs. Each step took longer than expected, but we were finally through them all.

October 26, 2020, I became a published author with ‘SELLING BENEFITS: Lessons Learned, Voyages Travelled, Stories Shared’ hitting the Friesen Press shelves with Amazon, Kindle, Kobo, and others following within the next week or so. Rob Crowder, of The Benefits Trust,

to return the boat only to see restaurants closing and things getting serious, and fast. We looked for earlier flights only to find none available and, as it turned out, we were on the last commercial flight off the island before the airport closed and we made it home to a whole new world.

I’ve worked from home for over 25 years so this new model was nothing new, but it did provide me with more time

a trusted friend and supporter, was the first to purchase a copy of the book. I couldn’t wait to see a copy and was second.

Teaser Videos

I’d set up the website – www.selling-benefits.ca – back in May of that year and now was the time to add teaser videos and links to the various sellers. The site was



launched, the books available for download or to 'print to order,' but I had yet to see a real printed copy yet. That ended with a bang in early December when a skid of 1,000 softcover books showed up in my driveway.

I wasted no time in promoting and started selling books through a COVID-friendly drive through model on December 11, 2020. Some neighbours dropped over and bought a copy to be nice, but many friends and brokerages bought them to give to their teams. A few TPAs and an MGA bought copies to give to their advisors and some insurers bought for both internal and external use. I was selling boxes of books (often 50 or 100 at a time) and sat in the driveway signing copies and adding bookmarks and personalization. It was amazing to see so many people drop by to show support.

As readers enjoyed the book, they provided feedback, comments, and posted reviews which led very quickly to requests for an Audible version. I didn't realize how many people didn't read printed or even eBooks, but liked to listen to books to digest content. I started to do research into what it would take to narrate and create an Audible version of the book. The first questions I was faced with was 'should I have someone else narrate it?' Maybe someone like Tom Selleck I thought with a laugh. The feedback from many was that the book was written in much the same manner as I speak, so there really was no choice, I'd narrate the book myself.

I started to do more research into what was required to do the actual recording I searched out and hired a sound engineer and pulled out all my recording equipment to get things rolling over the holidays.

You'd think that would be an easy task, just hit record and read the book and you are done, Right? Apart from editing, it was actually one of the hardest things. A sound check found background noises



that needed to be removed. The furnace fan, a clock ticking, and a computer fan in the background all created sounds that had to be shut off. There was hum from fluorescent lights and an ambient echo, so before you know it I had blankets hanging all over and around me to mute the noise so recording could begin. Many takes, as well as many hours and days later, I had a draft version to give to the sound engineer. We had to do quite a few recordings and retakes later and we were finally ready to submit it to the Audible site. It then took them over 10 months, but on February 12, 2021, the Audible version was approved and launched.

Amazing Feedback

In addition to web sales, drive-throughs, and downloads, I shared copies with all my group benefit clients. The idea was that they would get to know a bit more about myself and my business. The feedback was amazing, and has only strengthened our relationship (even when it shared my success formula that provided me with 14 weeks of vacation last

year). Prospects responded even better when they were offered a copy (in any format they liked) with many commenting afterwards 'Did you know your book is on Amazon?' Yup, that's me.

The book has now been out in the real world for two years, has sold almost 1,000 softcover copies fulfilled by myself, 124 soft and 95 hard cover web sales, and 126 audible downloads. Not a Canadian best seller, nor do I see movie rights in the works, but an amazing experience, a great distraction from the pandemic and a dream come true.

We all have a book in us. If you're serious and have one you've written, reach out and I'll try and help anyway I can. **BPM**



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