



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

The Stepping Stone

May 2012 – Issue 46

BOOK REVIEW:

How to Win Friends & Influence People by Dale Carnegie

Review by Ben Wadsley

If you enjoy a good greasy burger and are ever in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, I recommend the “Super Cheeseburger” at the Starlite Room. It is one of the best hamburgers in town, and a great place to meet coworkers for lunch. While this is a well known fact among the seasoned actuaries in our group, a newer actuary in our group had never been there. I had overlooked taking her there because it was such a standard and so well known that I assumed that she was already a regular, but in doing so I was leaving out this great treat.

I feel like I was in that position when introduced to the book *How to Win Friends & Influence People* by Dale Carnegie. Originally released in 1936, this book has been read by multiple generations, guiding relationship and networking building skills, but like the woman who didn’t know about the Starlite Room, I hadn’t been introduced to this book until now.

Many of the examples in this book are driven toward sales, but the principles are very much applicable to actuarial communication. I was a bit intimidated when I bought the book, and almost ashamed if someone saw it on my bookshelf, as the title implies it is teaching you to be a sneaky salesman. Quite the contrary, I would rename it something like “How to lead a productive team without them hating you for it”.

Carnegie’s book is filled with so many case studies that demonstrate how to use the techniques described, that I didn’t know which ones to discuss here. Ironically, I was on a plane to Dallas when I was writing this review when the flight attendant used one of the techniques spelled out in the book.

I was hammering out the intro on my new iPad and keyboard when the pilot announced that we were about to land. I knew that I was going to be forced to put my new Apple gear underneath the seat in front of me ... what a quick way to turn a new iPad into a used one. My plan was to momentarily put it

under the seat until the flight attendant went by, and then sneak it back up, making the flight attendant’s job much harder as he would probably catch me and then tell me again to put it away a second time.

To my surprise, instead of ordering me to put away my equipment, he approached me and said “That is the neatest iPad keyboard I’ve seen, show me how it works.” I showed him, and he asked where he could buy one of his own. I quickly went from lamenting his coming orders to enjoying discussing the features of my new keyboard. I knew he wanted me to put away my iPad, but because the way he approached me I was eager to comply and I even left it there after he was gone! Instead of ‘ordering’ me to do something, he instead won me over, got me talking about something that I enjoyed, and subtly hinted at what he wanted accomplished. This mix of several of Carnegie’s techniques got me to do what he wanted, and made me happy to do it!

For any actuary who works with other people (hint: we all do!), this should be required reading, and should be revisited often!

Ben Wadsley, FSA, MAAA, has worked for Transamerica for eight years in asset/liability management, investment, and economic capital. He is currently a risk manager for Employer Solutions and Pensions (ES&P) concentrating on Pensions, Stable Value Wraps, BOLI and Worksite products. He is past chairperson of the Forecasting and Futurism Section, and a council member of the Actuary of the Future Section. ●



Ben Wadsley, FSA, MAAA, is risk manager at Employer Solutions and Pensions.